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THE

New Life

OF DANTE.

AN ESSAY, WITH TRANSLATIONS.

BY

CHARLES ELIOT NORTON.

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TO

JAMES RUSSELL LOWELL

THIS LITTLE BOOK IS MOST AFFECTIONATELY

DEDICATED.

" Libretto mio, va agli amanti di pregio
Che ſanno con prudenza Amor ſeguire
E diventa ſe puoi del lor Collegio,
Perchè ſon ſavi e ti ſtaranno a udire;
Con lor ti allarga in ciò che tu vuoi dire."

THE following Eſſay originally appeared in *The Atlantic Monthly*, for January, February, and March, 1859. In this reprint it has been conſiderably enlarged with additional tranſlations and original matter I have left unſaid many things that are ſuggeſted to one who reads carefully the *Vita Nuova*, both in regard to its intrinſic qualities and its relation to the life and the other works of Dante. I have done ſo becauſe this volume is only for thoſe *che ſanno con prudenza Amor ſeguire*. They will feel that a certain reſerve is appropriate in treating of a book ſo full of tendereſt ſentiment veiled often under formal expreſſions, and that a reſpectful deference is required in dealing with the intimate revelations of a character ſo great and ſo peculiar as that of Dante.

I made the tranſlation of which a part is here printed during a winter in Rome, when I could engage in no more ſerious work. I have found the *Vita Nuova* a ſource not only of pleaſure, but of invigoration in ſeaſons of languor and diſappointment. It is the doorway to a cathedral into which no one can enter without having his ſpirit elevated and purified by its ſacred influences.

SHADY HILL,

Cambridge, 16th November, 1859.

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THE NEW LIFE.

I.

T that ſeaſon," ſays Boccaccio, in his Life of Dante, "when the ſweetneſs of heaven "reclothes the earth with its adornments, "and makes it all ſmiling with the variety "of flowers among the green leaves, it "was the cuſtom in our city for the men and for the "ladies to keep holiday in their wards all together, or in "ſeparate companies. And ſo it happened, that, among "the reſt, Folco Portinari, a man held in much honor "in thoſe times among the citizens, had gathered his "neighbors at a feaſt in his own houſe on the firſt of "May. Among them was the before-named Alighieri— "and, as little boys are wont to follow their fathers, eſpe- "cially to feſtive places, Dante, whoſe ninth year was "not yet finiſhed, accompanied him. And here, with "others of his age, of whom, both boys and girls, there "were many at the houſe of the entertainer, the firſt "tables having been ſerved, he boyiſhly gave himſelf to "merry-making, at ſuch ſports as were ſuitable to his

tender

"tender years. Among the children was a little daugh-
"ter of Folco, whoſe name was Bice,—that is, ſo ſhe
"was called from her primitive name, Beatrice. She was,
"perhaps, eight years old, a pretty little thing in her girl-
"iſh way, very ladylike and pleaſing in her actions, and
"much more ſedate in her manners and modeſt in her
"words than her years required. Beſide this, ſhe had
"very delicate features, admirably proportioned, and full,
"in addition to their beauty, of ſuch dignity and charm,
"that ſhe was looked upon by many as a little angel. She
"then, ſuch as I depict her, or perhaps, far more beauti-
"ful, appeared at this feaſt before the eyes of our Dante,
"not, I believe, for the firſt time, but firſt with power to
"enamour him. And although ſtill a child, he received
"her image into his heart with ſuch affection, that, from
"that day forward, never, as long as he lived, did it de-
"part therefrom." [1]

It was partly from tradition, partly from the record which Dante himſelf had left of it, that Boccaccio drew his account of this ſcene. In the *Vita Nuova*,—The New Life,—Dante has written the firſt part of the hiſtory of that love which began at this feſtival, and which, growing with his growth, became, not many years after, the controlling paſſion of his life. The love which laſted from his boyhood to his death, keeping his heart freſh, ſpite of the ſcorchings of diſappointment, with ſprings of perpetual ſolace,—the love, which, purified and ſpiritualized by the bitterneſs of ſeparation and trial, led him through the hard

hard paths of Philoſophy and up the ſteep aſcents of Faith, bringing him out of Hell and through Purgatory, to the glories of Paradiſe and the fulfilment of Hope,— ſuch a love was not only a ſpiritual experience, but it was alſo a diſcipline of character whoſe reſults were exhibited in the continually renewed ſtruggles and progreſſive achievements of life.

The earthly ſtory of this love,—its beginning, its irregular courſe, its hopes and doubts, its exaltations and deſpairs, its ſudden interruption and transformation by death,—is the ſtory which the *Vita Nuova* tells. The narrative is quaint, embroidered with conceits, deficient in artiſtic completeneſs, but it has the *naïveté* and ſimplicity of youth, the charm of ſincerity, the freedom of perſonal confidence; and ſo long as there are lovers in the world, ſo long as lovers are poets, ſo long will this firſt and tendereſt love-ſtory of modern literature be read with appreciation and reſponſive ſympathy.

But *The New Life* has an intereſt of another ſort and a claim, not ſufficiently recognized, upon all who would read the *Divina Commedia* with fit appreciation, in that it contains the firſt hint of the great poem itſelf, and furniſhes for it a ſpecial, interior, imaginative introduction, without the knowledge of which it is not thoroughly to be underſtood. The character of Beatrice, as ſhe appears in the *Divina Commedia*, the relation in which the poet ſtands to her, the motive of the dedication of the poem to her honor and memory, and many minor allu-

ſions,

ſions, are all explained or illuſtrated by the aid of the *Vita Nuova*.

Dante's works and life are interwoven as are thoſe of no other of the poets who have written for all time. No other has ſo written his autobiography. With Dante, external impreſſions and internal experiences — ſights, actions, thoughts, emotions, ſufferings — were all fuſed into poetry as they paſſed through his ſoul. Practical life and imaginative life were with him one and indiſſoluble. Not only was the life of imagination as real to him as the life of fact, but the life of fact was clothed upon by that of imagination; ſo that, on the one hand, daily events and common circumſtances became a part of his ſpiritual experience in a far more intimate ſenſe than is the caſe with other men, while, on the other, his fancies and his viſions aſſumed the abſoluteneſs and the literal exiſtence of poſitive external facts. The remoteſt flights of his imagination never carry him where his ſight becomes dim. His journey through the ſpiritual world was no leſs real to him than his journeys between Florence and Rome, or his wanderings between Verona and Ravenna. So abſolute is his imagination that his reader is forced to believe that the poet beheld with his mortal eyes the inviſible ſcenes which he deſcribes. Boccaccio relates, that after that part of the *Commedia* which treats of Hell had become famous, it happened one day in Verona, that Dante "paſſed before a door where ſeveral women were ſitting, "and one of them, in a low voice, yet not ſo but that ſhe

"ſhe was well heard by him and his companion, ſaid to "the other women: 'See that man who goes through Hell "and comes back when he pleaſes, and brings news of "thoſe who are down there!' And then one of them re- "plied ſimply: 'Indeed, what you ſay muſt be true; for do "you not ſee how his beard is criſped and his face brown "with the heat and ſmoke of it?'"[2]

More than any other poet Dante has ſet the mark of his individual nature upon his works, has more completely created them out of his own life. The objects with which his imagination deals are ſeen through the medium of his own perſonality. He never loſes conſciouſneſs of himſelf, but at the ſame time he is never ſelf-engroſſed. His works are tranſcripts of himſelf, and on this account the *Vita Nuova* has a peculiar intereſt, as the earlieſt of his writings, and the moſt autobiographic of them in form and intention. In it we are brought into intimate perſonal relations with the poet. He truſts himſelf to us with full and free confidence; but there is no derogation from becoming manlineſs in his confeſſions. He draws the picture of a portion of his youth, and lays bare its tendereſt emotions; but he does ſo with no morbid ſelf-conſciouſneſs, and with no affectation. Part of this ſimplicity is due, undoubtedly, to the character of the times, part to his own youthfulneſs, part to downright faith in his own genius. It was the faſhion for poets to tell of their loves; in following this faſhion, he not only gave expreſſion to genuine feeling, and claimed his rank

rank among the poets, but alſo fixed a ſtandard by which the ideal expreſſion of love was thereafter to be meaſured.

This firſt eſſay of his poetic powers reſts on the foundation upon which his later life was built. The figure of Beatrice, which appears veiled under the allegory, and indiſtinct in the bright cloud of the myſticiſm of the *Divina Commedia*, takes her place in life and on the earth through the *Vita Nuova*, as definitely as Dante himſelf. She is no allegorized piece of humanity, no imperſonation of attributes, but an actual woman,—beautiful, modeſt, gentle, with companions only leſs beautiful than herſelf,—the moſt delightful figure in the midſt of the pictureſque life of Florence. She is ſeen ſmiling and weeping, walking with ſtately maidenly decorum in the ſtreet, praying at the church, merry at feſtivals, mourning at funerals; and her ſmiles and tears, her gentleneſs, her reſerve, all the ſweet qualities of her life, and the peace of her death, are told of with ſuch tenderneſs and refinement, ſuch pathetic melancholy, ſuch delicate purity, and ſuch paſſionate vehemence, that ſhe remains, and will always remain, the loveliеſt and moſt womanly woman of the Middle Ages,—at once abſolutely real and truly ideal.

It is impoſſible to fix with preciſe accuracy the date of the final compoſition of the *Vita Nuova*. The firſt poem contained in it was written, as Dante tells us, in his nineteenth year, that is, in the year 1282 or 1283, and the greater number of thoſe which follow were compoſed during the

the life of Beatrice. She died in June, 1290, and Dante gives to us a ſonnet which was written on the firſt anniverſary of her death. But the cloſing poems of this *libretto d'amore* cannot have been written until a later period. The earlieſt date that can be aſſigned to the putting together of the book is 1292, but there are ſome reaſons for believing that a later year ſhould be aſſumed as the true one of its completion.* The little volume contains thirty-one poems, accompanied by a narrative in proſe, and by a commentary explanatory of the diviſions in the form or matter of each.

The meaning of the name *La Vita Nuova*, has been the ſubject of elaborate diſcuſſion among the commentators. Literally *The New Life*, it has been queſtioned whether this phraſe meant ſimply early life, or life made new by the firſt experience and laſting influence of love. The latter interpretation ſeems the moſt appropriate to Dante's turn of mind and to his condition of feeling at the time when the little book appeared. To him it was the record of that life which the preſence of Beatrice had made new.[3]

But whatever be the true ſignificance of the title, this *New Life* is full, not only of the youthfulneſs of its author, but alſo of the freſh and youthful ſpirit of the time. Italy, after a long period of childhood, was now becoming

* See Appendix, A.—"Date of the compoſition of the *Vita Nuova*."

becoming poſſeſſed of the powers of maturity. Society, (to borrow a fine figure from Lamennais,) like a river, which, long loſt in marſhes, had at length regained its channel, after ſtagnating for centuries, was once more rapidly advancing. Throughout Italy there was a morning freſhneſs, and the thrill and exhilaration of conſcious activity. Her imagination was rouſed by the revival of ancient and now new learning, by the ſtories of travellers, by the gains of commerce, by the excitements of religion and the alarms of ſuperſtition. She was boaſtful, jealous, quarrelſome, laviſh, magnificent, full of fickleneſs,—exhibiting on all ſides the exuberance, the magnanimity, the folly of youth. After the long winter of the Dark Ages, ſpring had come, and the earth was renewing its beauty. And above all other cities in theſe days Florence was full of the pride of life. Civil brawls had not yet reduced her to become an eaſy prey for foreign conquerors. She was famous for wealth, and her ſpirit had riſen with proſperity. Many years before, one of the Provençal troubadours, writing to his friend in verſe, had ſaid,—"Friend Gaucelm, if you go to Tuſcany, "ſeek a ſhelter in the noble city of the Florentines, which "is named Florence. There all true valor is found; there "joy and ſong and love are perfect and adorned." And if this was true in the earlier years of the thirteenth century, it was ſtill truer of its cloſe; for much of early ſimplicity and purity of manners had diſappeared before the increaſing luxury (*le morbidezze d' Egitto*, as Boccaccio terms

terms it,) and the gathered wealth of the city,—ſo that gayety and ſong more than ever abounded.[4] "It is to be "noted," ſays Giovanni Villani, writing of this time, "it is "to be noted that Florence and her citizens were never in "a happier condition." The chroniclers tell of conſtant feſtivals and celebrations. "In the year 1283, in the "month of June, at the feaſt of St. John, the city of Flor- "ence being in a happy and good ſtate of repoſe,—a tran- "quil and peaceable ſtate, excellent for merchants and "artificers,—there was formed a company of a thouſand "men or more, all clothed in white dreſſes, with a leader "called the Lord of Love, who devoted themſelves to "games and ſports and dancing, going through the city "with trumpets and other inſtruments of joy and gladneſs, "and feaſting often together. And this court laſted for two "months, and was the moſt noble and famous that ever "was held in Florence or in all Tuſcany, and many gen- "tlemen came to it, and many rhymers,[5] and all were wel- "comed and honorably cared for." Every year, the ſummer was opened with May and June feſtivals. Florence was rejoicing in abundance and beauty.[6] Nor was it only in paſſing gayeties that the cheerful and liberal temper of the people was diſplayed.

The many great works of Art which were begun and carried on to completion at this time ſhow with what large ſpirit the whole city was inſpired, and under what ſtrong influences of public feeling the early life of Dante was led. Civil liberty and ſtrength were producing their legitimate

gitimate results. Little republic as she was, Florence was great enough for great undertakings. Never was there such a noble activity within the narrow compass of her walls as from about 1265, when Dante was born, to the end of the century. In these thirty-five years, the stout walls and the tall tower of the Bargello were built, the grand foundations of the Palazzo Vecchio and of the unrivalled Duomo were laid, and both in one year; the Baptistery — *Il mio bel San Giovanni* — was adorned with a new covering of marble; the churches of Santa Maria Novella, and Santa Croce, — the finest churches even now in Florence, — were begun and carried far on to completion.[7] Each new work was at once the fruit and the feed of glorious energy. The small city, of less than one hundred thousand inhabitants, the little republic not so large as Rhode Island or Delaware, was setting an example which later and larger and richer republics have not followed. It might well, indeed, be called a "new life" for Florence, as well as for Dante. When it was determined to supply the place of the old church of Santa Reparata with a new cathedral, a decree was passed in words of memorable spirit: "Whereas it is the highest interest of "a people of illustrious origin so to proceed in their affairs "that men may perceive from their external works that their "doings are at once wise and magnanimous, it is therefore "ordered, that Arnolfo, architect of our commune, prepare "the model or design for the rebuilding of Santa Reparata, "with such supreme and lavish magnificence that neither the

"the induſtry nor the capacity of man ſhall be able to deviſe "anything more grand or more beautiful; inaſmuch as the "moſt judicious in this city have pronounced the opinion, "in public and private conferences, that no work of the "commune ſhould be undertaken, unleſs the deſign be to "make it correſpondent with a heart which is of the greateſt "nature, becauſe compoſed of the ſpirit of many citizens "united together in one ſingle will."[8] The records of few other cities contain a decree ſo magnificent as this.

It would be ſtrange, indeed, if the youthful book of one ſo ſenſitive to external influences as Dante did not give evidence of ſympathy with ſuch pervading emotion. One may ſay that only at ſuch a period, when ſtrength of ſentiment was finding vent in all manner of free expreſſion, was ſuch a book poſſible. Confidence, frankneſs, directneſs in the rendering of perſonal feeling are rare, except in conditions of ſociety when the emotional ſpirit is ſtronger than the critical.

The moſt marked characteriſtic of art at this time and of poetry as repreſented by Dante was an aſſertion of freedom, and a return to nature as the ſource not only of inſpiration but of ſtrength. Old and authoritative ſyſtems were diſcarded. The eſtabliſhed manneriſm and conventional forms which had ſhackled genius and reſtrained imagination, yielded to the ſtrong impulſe of vigorous and natural life, which reſtored truth of expreſſion and truth of feeling to painting and to poetry, and opened the way

way to modern art and literature by achievements which in ſpiritual ſignificance have never ſince been ſurpaſſed.

The Italian poets, before Dante, may be broadly divided into two claſſes. The firſt was that of the troubadours, who wrote in the Provençal language, and were hardly to be diſtinguiſhed from their contemporaries of the ſouth of France. They gave expreſſion in their verſes to the ideas of love, gallantry, and valor which formed the baſe of the complex and artificial ſyſtem of chivalry, repeating one after the other the ſame fancies and thoughts in ſimilar formulas of words, without ſcope or truth of imagination, with rare exhibitions of individual feeling, with little regard for Nature. Ingenuity is more characteriſtic of their poetry than force, ſubtilty more obvious in it than beauty. The ſecond and later claſs were poets who wrote in the Italian tongue, but ſtill under the influence of the poetic code which had governed the compoſitions of their Provençal predeceſſors. Their poetry is, for the moſt part, a faded copy of an unſubſtantial original,—an echo of ſounds originally faint. Truth and poetry were effectually divided. In the latter half of the thirteenth century, however, a few poets appeared whose verſes give evidence of ſome native life, and are enlivened by a freer play of fancy and a greater truthfulneſs of feeling. Guido Guinicelli, who died in 1276, when Dante was eleven years old, and, a little later, Guido Cavalcanti, and ſome few others,

others, truſting more than had been done before to their own inſpiration, ſhow themſelves as the forerunners of a better day.[9] But as, in painting, Margheritone and Cimabue, ſtanding between the old and the new ſtyles, exhibit rather a vague ſtriving than a fulfilled attainment, ſo is it with theſe poets. There is little that is diſtinguiſhingly individual in them. Love is ſtill treated moſtly as an abſtraction, and one poet might adopt another's love verſes with few changes of words for the expreſſion of any manifeſt difference of perſonal feeling.

Not ſo with Dante. The *Vita Nuova*, although retaining many forms and expreſſions derived from earlier poets, is his, and could be the work of no other. Nor was he unaware of this difference between himſelf and thoſe that had gone before him, or ignorant of its nature. In deſcribing himſelf to Buonagiunta da Lucca in Purgatory, he ſays, "I am one who, when Love breathes, mark, "and according as he dictates within, I report"; to which the poet of Lucca replies, "O brother, now I ſee the "knot which kept the Notary and Guittone and me back "from that ſweet new ſtyle which now I hear. I ſee well "how your pens have followed cloſe on the dictator, which "truly was not the caſe with ours." *Purgatory*, xxiv. 53–60. As Love was the common theme of the verſes from which Buonagiunta drew his contraſt, the difference between them lay plainly in ſincerity of feeling and truth of expreſſion. The following cloſe upon the dictates of his heart was the diſtinguiſhing merit of Dante's love poetry

poetry over all that had preceded it and moſt of what has followed it. There are, however, ſome among his earlier poems in which the "ſweet new ſtyle" is ſcarcely heard,—and others of a later period, in which the cuſtomary metaphyſical and fanciful ſubtilties of the elder poets are drawn out to an unwonted fineneſs. Theſe were conceſſions to a ruling mode,—conceſſions the more readily made, becauſe in complete harmony with the ſtrong ſubtilizing and allegorizing tendencies of Dante's own mind. Still, ſo far as he adopts the modes of his predeceſſors in this firſt book of his, Dante ſurpaſſes them all in their own way. He leaves them far behind him, and looks forward to new paths which he is to tread alone.

But there is yet another tendency of the times, to which Dante, in his later works, has given the fulleſt and moſt characteriſtic expreſſion, and which exhibits itſelf curiouſly in the *Vita Nuova*. Correſponding with the new ardor for the arts, and in ſympathy with it, was a newly awakened and generally diffuſed ardor for learning, eſpecially for the various branches of philoſophy. Science was leaving the cloiſter, in which ſhe had ſat in dumb ſolitude, and coming out into the world. But the limits and diviſions of knowledge were not firmly marked out. The relations of learning to life were not clearly underſtood. The ſcience of mathematics was not yet ſo advanced as to bind philoſophy to exactneſs. The minds of men were quickened by a new ſenſe of freedom, and ſtimulated by ardor of imagination. New worlds of undiſcovered knowledge

edge loomed vaguely along the horizon. Philoſophy invaded the ſphere of poetry, while, on the other hand, poetry gave its form to much of the prevailing philoſophy. To be a proper poet was not only to be a writer of verſes, but to be a maſter of learning. Boccaccio deſcribes Guido Cavalcanti as "one of the beſt logicians in "the world, and as a moſt excellent natural philoſopher,"[10] but ſays nothing of his poetry. Dante, more than any other man of his time, exhibited in himſelf the general zeal for knowledge. His genius had two diſtinct, and yet often intermingling parts,—the poetic and the ſcientific. No learning came amiſs to him. He was born a ſtudent, as he was born a poet,—and had he never written a ſingle poem, he would ſtill have been famous as the moſt profound ſcholar of his times. Far as he ſurpaſſed his contemporaries in poetry, he was no leſs their ſuperior in the depth and the extent of his knowledge. And this double nature of his genius is plainly ſhown in many parts of *The New Life*. A youthful incapacity to draw clearly the line between the work of the ſtudent and the work of the poet is manifeſt in it. The diſplay of his acquiſitions is curiouſly mingled with the narrative of his emotions. This is not to be charged againſt him as pedantry. His love of learning partook of the nature of paſſion; his judgment was not yet able, if indeed it ever became able, to eſtabliſh the diviſion between the abſtractions of the intellect and the affections of the heart. And more than this, his early claim

claim of honor as a poet was to be juſtified by his poſſeſſion and exhibition of the fruits of ſtudy.

Moreover, the mind of Dante was of a quality which led him to unite learning with poetry in a manner peculiar to himſelf. He was eſſentially a myſtic. The dark and hidden ſide of things was not leſs preſent to his imagination than the viſible and plain. The range of human capacity in the comprehenſion of the ſpiritual world was not then marked by as numerous boundary-ſtones of failure as now limit the way. Impoſſibilities were ſought for with the ſame confident hope as realities. The alchemiſts and the aſtrologers believed in the attainment of reſults as tangible and real as thoſe which travellers brought back from the marvellous and ſtill unachieved Eaſt. The myſtical properties of numbers, the influence of the ſtars, the powers of cordials and elixirs, the virtues of precious ſtones, were received as eſtabliſhed facts, and opened long viſtas of diſcovery before the ſtudent's eyes. A ring of myſtery ſurrounded the familiar world, and outſide the known lands of the earth lay a region unknown except to the fancy, from which ſtrange gales blew and ſtrange clouds floated up. Curioſity and inquiry were ſtimulated and made earneſt by wonder. Wild, imaginative ſpeculations formed the baſis of ſerious and patient ſtudies. Dante, partaking to the full in the eager ſpirit of the times, ſharing all the ardor of the purſuit of knowledge, and with a ſpiritual inſight which led him into regions of myſtery where no others ventured, naturally aſſociated the knowledge which opened

opened the way for him with the poetic imagination which caſt light upon it. To him ſcience was but another name for poetry.

Much learning has been expended in the attempt to ſhow that the doctrine of Love, which is diſplayed in *The New Life*, is derived, more or leſs directly, from the philoſophy of Plato. It has been ſuppoſed that this little autobiographic ſtory, full of the moſt intimate perſonal revelations, and glowing with a ſincere paſſion, was deliberately written in accordance with a preconceived theory. A certain Platonic form of expreſſion, often covering ideas very far removed from thoſe of Plato, was common to the earlier, colder, and leſs truthful poets. Some ſtrains of ſuch Platoniſm, derived from the poems of his predeceſſors, are perhaps to be found in this firſt book of Dante's. But there is nothing to ſhow that he had intentionally adopted the teachings of the ancient philoſopher. It may well, indeed, be doubted if at the time of its compoſition he had read any of Plato's works. Such Platoniſm as exiſts in *The New Life* was of that unconſcious kind which is ſhared by every youth of thoughtful nature and ſenſitive temperament, who makes of his beloved a type and image of divine beauty, and who through the lovelineſs of the creature is led up to the perfection of the Creator.

The eſſential qualities of the *Vita Nuova*, thoſe which afford direct illuſtration of Dante's character, as diſtinguiſhed from ſuch as may be called youthful, or merely literary, or biographical, correſpond in ſtriking meaſure with thoſe of

of the *Divina Commedia*. The earthly Beatrice is exalted to the heavenly in the later poem; but the entire purity and intenſity of feeling with which ſhe is reverently regarded in the *Divina Commedia* are ſcarcely leſs characteriſtic of the earlier work. The imagination which makes the unſeen ſeen, and the unreal real, belongs alike to the one and to the other. The *Vita Nuova* is chiefly occupied with a ſeries of viſions; the *Divina Commedia* is one long viſion. The ſympathy with the ſpirit and impulſes of the time, which in the firſt reveals the youthful impreſſibility of the poet, in the laſt diſcloſes itſelf in maturer forms, in more perſonal expreſſions. In the *Vita Nuova* it is a ſympathy maſtering the natural ſpirit; in the *Divina Commedia* the ſympathy is controlled by the force of eſtabliſhed character. The change is that from him who follows to him who commands. It is the privilege of men of genius, not only to give more than others to the world, but alſo to receive more from it. Sympathy, in its full comprehenſiveneſs, is the proof of the ſtrongeſt individuality. By as much as Dante or Shakſpeare learnt of and entered into the hearts of men, by ſo much was his own nature ſtrengthened and made peculiarly his own. The *New Life* ſhows the firſt ſtages of that genius, the firſt proofs of that comprehenſive ſympathy, which at length find their full manifeſtation in the *Divine Comedy*. It is like the firſt blade of ſpring graſs, rich with the promiſe of the golden harveſt.

II.

II.

ERE the author of the *Vita Nuova* unknown, its ſtory of youth and love would ſtill poſſeſs a charm, as ſtanding in the dawn of modern literature, — the firſt book in which modern ſentiment finds free expreſſion. It would be of intereſt, as contraſted with the later growth of the ſentimental element in literature, which ſpeedily exhibits the marks of factitious feeling, of ſelf-conſcious effort, and of ambitious diſplay. The *Vita Nuova* is ſeparated by the wide gulf that lies between ſimplicity and affectation from the ſonnets of Petrarch and the whole race of his followers. But a deeper intereſt belongs to it from the illuſtration which it affords of the life of the chief poet of the modern era, — as the firſt of a ſeries of works in which truth, intenſity, and tenderneſs of feeling are diſplayed as in the writings of no other man, and in which the whole ſpiritual autobiography of the poet is written.

The narrative which connects the poems of the firſt part of the *Vita Nuova* ſeems to have been begun not long after the death of Beatrice in 1290. Dante found a ſad happineſs in recalling the ſweet incidents of her life, and of her influence upon himſelf; and he took a mournful pleaſure in ſetting forth the poems which he had written for her ſake, while ſhe was yet upon earth. The *New Life* begins thus : —

" In

"In that part of the book of my memory before which "little can be read, is found a rubric which ſays: *Incipit* "*Vita Nova* ['The New Life begins']. Under which "rubric I find the words written which it is my intention "to copy into this little book,—if not all of them, at leaſt "their meaning."

This introduction, ſhort as it is, exhibits a characteriſtic trait of Dante's mind, in the declaration of his intention to copy from the book of his memory, or, in other words, to write the true records of experience. Truth was the fundamental principle of his intellect, and upon it, as upon a rock, reſted the marvellous power and conſiſtency of his imaginations. His heart ſpoke clearly, and he interpreted its ſpeech plainly in his words. His tendency to myſticiſm often, indeed, led him into ſtrange fancies; but theſe, though ſometimes obſcure, are never vague. After theſe few words of preface the ſtory begins:—

"Nine times now, ſince my birth, the heaven of light "had turned almoſt to the ſame point in its gyration, when "firſt appeared before my eyes the glorious lady of my "mind, who was called Beatrice by many who did not know "why they thus called her.[11] She had now been in this life "ſo long, that in its courſe the ſtarry heaven had moved "toward the eaſt one of the twelve parts of a degree;[12] ſo "that about the beginning of her ninth year ſhe appeared to "me, and I near the end of my ninth year ſaw her. She "appeared to me clothed in a moſt noble color, a becoming "and modeſt crimſon, and ſhe was girt and adorned in the ſtyle

" ſtyle that became her extreme youth. At that inſtant, I " ſay truly, the ſpirit of life, which dwells in the moſt " ſecret chamber of the heart, began to tremble with ſuch " violence, that it appeared fearfully in the leaſt pulſes, and, " trembling, ſaid theſe words: *Ecce deus fortior me, qui ve-* " *niens dominabitur mihi!* [Behold a god, ſtronger than I, " who, coming, ſhall rule me![13]]

" At that inſtant, the ſpirit of the ſoul, which dwells in " the high chamber to which all the ſpirits of the ſenſes " bring their perceptions, began to marvel greatly, and, " addreſſing the ſpirits of the ſight, ſaid theſe words: *Ap-* " *paruit jam beatitudo veſtra.* [Now hath appeared your " bliſs.] At that inſtant the natural ſpirit, which dwells in " that part where the nouriſhment is ſupplied, began to " weep, and, weeping, ſaid theſe words: *Heu miser! quia* " *frequenter impeditus ero deinceps.* [Woe is me wretched! " becauſe frequently henceforth ſhall I be hindered.]

" From this time forward I ſay that Love lorded it over " my ſoul, which had been thus quickly put at his diſpoſal;[14] " and he began to exerciſe over me ſuch control and ſuch " lordſhip, through the power which my imagination gave " to him, that it behoved me to perform completely all his " pleaſure. He commanded me many times that I ſhould " ſeek to ſee this youthful angel, ſo that I in my boyhood " often went ſeeking her, and ſaw her of ſuch noble and " praiſeworthy deportment, that truly of her might be ſaid " that ſaying of the poet Homer: 'She does not ſeem the " daughter of mortal man, but of God.' And though her image,

" image, which ſtayed conſtantly with me, inſpired confi-
" dence in Love to hold lordſhip over me, yet it was of
" ſuch noble virtue, that it never ſuffered that Love ſhould
" rule without the faithful counſel of Reaſon in thoſe mat-
" ters in which ſuch counſel could be uſeful."

Such is the account which Dante gives of the beginning of his love for Beatrice. The tenderneſs and purity of his paſſion are obſcured, but not concealed, by quaintneſs of expreſſion and formality of learning. In literary ſtyle the paſſage diſplays the uncertain hand of youth, and in a tranſlation ſomething is loſt of the charm of ſimplicity which pervades the original. But in this paſſage the key-note of Dante's life is ſtruck.

Omitting many things, he ſays, that might ſeem fabulous in the ſtory of his early love, he will relate only thoſe which are written moſt diſtinctly in the records of his memory, and he goes on to tell, that " exactly nine years were
" completed after the above-deſcribed appearance of this
" moſt gentle lady, when it happened that ſhe appeared be-
" fore me clothed in pureſt white between two noble ladies,
" and, paſſing along the ſtreet, ſhe turned her eyes toward
" that place where I ſtood very timidly, and, by her ineffa-
" ble courteſy, which is now rewarded in eternity, ſaluted
" me with ſuch virtue, that I ſeemed to behold all the
" bounds of bliſs. The hour when her moſt ſweet ſaluta-
" tion reached me was exactly the ninth of that day; and
" ſince it was the firſt time that her words came to my ears,
" I felt ſuch great delight, that, as it were intoxicated, I
turned

" turned away from the crowd, and, betaking myſelf to the " ſolitary place of my chamber, ſat myſelf down to think of " this moſt courteous lady, and, thinking of her, a ſweet " ſlumber came upon me, in which a marvellous viſion " appeared to me." After deſcribing this viſion, he ſays, that, thinking of what had appeared to him, he " propoſed " to bring it to the knowledge of many who were famous " poets at that time ; and ſince I had already ſeen in my- " ſelf the art of ſpeaking words in rhyme, I propoſed to " write a ſonnet, in which I would ſalute all the vaſſals of " Love. And praying them to give an interpretation of my " viſion, I wrote to them that which I had ſeen in my " ſlumber. And I began then this ſonnet : —

" To every captive ſoul and gentle heart,
" Before whoſe ſight may come the preſent word,
" That they may thereupon their thoughts impart,
" Be greeting in Love's name, who is their lord.
" Now of thoſe hours wellnigh one third had gone,
" In which each ſtar in heaven appears moſt bright,
" When on a ſudden Love before me ſhone,
" Remembrance of whoſe nature gives me fright.
" Joyful ſeemed Love, and he was keeping
" My heart within his hands, while on his arm
" He held my Lady, covered o'er and ſleeping.
" Then waking her, he with this flaming heart
" Did humbly feed her, fearful of ſome harm.
" And then I ſaw him weeping thence depart."

This ſonnet, the beauty of which is obſcured by the difficulty of interpreting its meaning, is of intereſt as being the

the earlieſt poetic compoſition by Dante that has been preſerved for us, and alſo as deſcribing a viſion. I have already referred to the fact that this book is in great part compoſed of the account of a ſeries of viſions, and is thus connected, in the form of its imaginations, with the great work of Dante's later years. As a deſcription of things unſeen, except by the inward eye, this ſonnet is united in poetic relationſhip to the nobler viſions of the *Divina Commedia*. The private ſtamp of Dante's imagination is indelibly impreſſed upon it.

He tells us that many anſwers were made to it, and "among thoſe who replied to it was he whom I call the "firſt of my friends, and he wrote a ſonnet which began,

'Thou ſeeſt in my opinion every worth.'

"This was, as it were, the beginning of our friendſhip, "when he learned that it was I who had ſent theſe verſes to "him." This firſt of Dante's friends was Guido Cavalcanti. Their friendſhip was of long duration, beginning thus in Dante's nineteenth year, and ending only with Guido's death, in 1300, when Dante was thirty-five years old. It may be taken as a proof of its intimacy and of Dante's high regard for the genius of his friend, that, when in his courſe through Hell, at Eaſter in 1300, he repreſents himſelf as being recognized by the father of Guido, the firſt words of the old man to him are,

"If through this blind priſon thou goeſt through loftineſs

"neſs of ſoul, where is my ſon? oh, why is he not with "thee?" *Inferno*, x. 58–60.

The ſonnet of Guido, in reply to that ſent him by Dante, has been preſerved, together with the replies by two other contemporary poets; but Dante ſays of them all,—"The "true meaning of my dream was not then ſeen by any one, "though now it is plain to the ſimpleſt."

After this viſion, the poet, whoſe ſoul was wholly devoted to his moſt gentle lady, was brought by Love into ſo frail a condition of health, that his friends became anxious for him, and queſtioned him about that which he moſt wiſhed to conceal. Then he told them that it was Love which had brought him to this paſs. But when they aſked him, "For whom has Love thus waſted thee?" he looked at them ſmiling, and ſaid nothing.

"One day it happened," he goes on to relate, "that "this moſt gentle one ſat where words concerning the "Queen of Glory were heard, and I was in a place from "which I beheld my bliſs. Between her and me in a "direct line ſat a gentle lady of moſt pleaſing aſpect, who "looked at me often, wondering at my gaze, which ſeemed "to terminate upon her; and many obſerved her looks. "So great attention, indeed, was paid to this, that when "I went out from the place I heard one near me ſay, 'Be-"hold how ſuch a lady waſtes the life of this man!'—and "naming her, I underſtood that he ſpake of her who had "been in the path of the ſtraight line which, parting from "the moſt gentle Beatrice, had ended in my eyes." Then he

he ſays he thought to make this lady ſerve as a ſcreen for his real love, and he did this ſo well that in a ſhort time many perſons fancied they knew his ſecret. And in order to deceive them ſtill more, he addreſſed to this lady many trifles in rhyme, of which he will inſert in this account of his "New Life" only ſuch as bear reference to Beatrice.

"During the time," he ſays, "when this lady was the "ſcreen of ſo great a love as poſſeſſed me, a deſire came "to me to record the name of the moſt gentle one, and to "unite it with many names of ladies and eſpecially with "the name of this gentlewoman; — and I took the names "of ſixty of the moſt beautiful ladies of the city where my "lady had been placed by the moſt high Lord, and I com-"poſed a letter in the form of a copy of verſes in triplets, "which I will not tranſcribe, and of which I would not "have made mention but for the ſake of telling this which "fell out marvellouſly in its compoſition, namely, that in "no other place was the name of my lady ſuffered to "ſtand but as the ninth among the names of theſe ladies."

But now it happened that the lady who had ſerved ſo long to conceal his real love, departed from Florence and went to a diſtant place, and Dante, troubled at the loſs of his beautiful defence, was diſconſolate at her going. Then in order to keep up the pretence which had ſerved him ſo well, he wrote ſome verſes which profeſſed to lament her departure, but which had alſo a ſecret reference to his own lady.

Some

Some time after this, "it was the pleaſure of the Lord "of the Angels to call to his glory a young and beautiful "lady, who had been very lovely in the city of Florence. "And I ſaw her body lying without its ſoul, ſurrounded "by many ladies who wept pitifully. Then remembering "that I had formerly ſeen her in company with that moſt "gentle one, I could not reſtrain ſome tears; and, weeping, "I propoſed to ſay ſome words about her death, in guerdon "for that I had ſeen her ſometimes with my lady." Then he wrote two poems, the laſt of which was this: —

"O villain Death, compaſſion's foe,
"The Mother from of old of woe,
"Inexorable judge ſevere,
"Thou giveſt ſorrow for the heart to bear;
"Wherefore in grief I go,
"And blaming thee my very tongue outwear.
"And if of every grace thou wouldſt be bare,
"It only needs that I declare
"The guilt of this thy ſinful blow,
"So that all thoſe ſhall know,
"And each ſhall be thy foe,
"Who henceforth shall be nurtured with Love's care.
"For thou haſt taken from the world the grace
"And virtue which are woman's praiſe,
"And in youth's gayeſt days
"The charm of lovelineſs thou doſt deface.
"Who is this lady is not to be told,
"Save as theſe qualities do make her known.
"He who deſerves ſalvation may alone
"Have hope companionſhip with her to hold.

This

"This ſonnet is divided into four parts.[15] In the firſt I "addreſs Death by certain of her proper names; in the "ſecond, ſpeaking to her, I tell the reaſon why I am "moved to reproach her; in the third, I revile her; in "the fourth, I ſpeak to a perſon undefined, although defi- "nite as regards my intention. The ſecond part begins "at *Thou giveſt;* the third at *And if of every grace;* the "fourth at *He who deſerves.*"

After this, Dante tells of a journey he was forced to take, in the direction of the city to which the lady who had afforded him the means of diſguiſing his real love had gone. He ſays, that, on the way, which he calls the way of ſighs, he met Love, who was ſad in aſpect, and clad like a pilgrim, and that Love told him the name of another lady who muſt thenceforth ſerve as the ſcreen to conceal his ſecret. He goes on to relate, that, after his return,[16] he ſought out this lady, and made her his defence ſo effectually, that many perſons ſpoke of it beyond the terms of courteſy, which weighed on him heavily. And on account of this lying talk which defamed him greatly, he ſays that Beatrice "the moſt gentle lady, who was the enemy of all the vices, "and the queen of virtue, paſſing by a certain place, de- "nied me her moſt ſweet ſalute, in which lay all my "bliſs. And departing a little from the preſent ſubject, I "will declare with what virtue her greeting wrought in me. "I ſay, then, that, whenever ſhe appeared, in my hope for "her marvellous ſalutation there no longer remained to "me an enemy, nay, a flame of charity poſſeſſed me which made

"made me pardon every one that had done me wrong; "and had any one at that time queſtioned me of anything, "my only anſwer would have been *Love*, and my face would "have been clothed with humility. And when ſhe was "about to ſalute me, a ſpirit of Love, deſtroying all the "other ſpirits of the ſenſes, drove out the feeble ſpirits of "the ſight, and ſaid to them, 'Go and do honor to your "lady,' and he abode in their place. And whoever had "wiſhed to know Love might have done ſo by looking at "the trembling of my eyes."

After that ſalutation which had been wont to bring to him a joy almoſt beyond his capacity had been refuſed to him, Dante went weeping to his chamber, where he could lament without being heard; and there he fell aſleep, crying like a little beaten child. And in his ſleep he had a viſion of Love, who entered into talk with him, and bade him write a poem, adorned with ſweet harmony, in which he ſhould ſet forth the truth and fidelity of his love for Beatrice, and ſhould ſue for her pardon. Dante awoke at the ninth hour of the day, and at once began the poem, of which the following is a portion. He perſonifies his poem, and he bids it

"Tell her,—'O Lady, this his heart is ſtayed
"On faithfulneſs ſo ſure and firm,
"Save to ſerve you it has no other care;
"Early 'twas yours and never has it ſtrayed.'
"But if ſhe truſt not what thou doſt affirm,
"Tell her to aſk of Love, who will the truth declare;

And

" And at the end, beg her, with humble prayer,
" That ſhe her pardon of its wrong would give;
" Then let her bid that I no longer live,
" And ſhe ſhall ſee her ſervant quick obey.[17]

" After the above deſcribed viſion, having now ſpoken the " words that Love had impoſed on me to ſpeak, many and " diverſe thoughts began to ſtruggle with me, and to aſſault " me as it were without defence. Among which thoughts " four chiefly diſturbed the repoſe of my life. One of them " was this: the lordſhip of Love is good becauſe it with- " draws the inclination of his vaſſal from all vile things. " Another was this: the lordſhip of Love is not good, be- " cauſe the more fidelity his vaſſal bears to him the heavier " and more grievous trials muſt he experience. Another " was this: the name of Love is ſo ſweet to hear that it " appears to me impoſſible that his effects in moſt things " ſhould be other than ſweet, ſeeing that names follow the " things named, as it is written, *Nomina ſunt conſequentia* " *rerum*, [Names are the conſequents of things.] The " fourth was this: the Lady for whom Love thus afflicts " thee, is not like other ladies whoſe hearts are lightly " moved. And each thought ſo ſtruggled with me that " it made me ſtand like one, who does not know by which " way to take his journey, who wiſhes to go and knows " not whither he ſhould go. And if I thought of deſir- " ing to ſeek a way common to them all, namely, that in " which they all might agree, this way was very hateful to " me, namely, to call upon and put myſelf in the arms of Pity

" Pity. And dwelling in this condition the will came to me " to write ſome rhymed words thereon, and I ſaid then this " ſonnet :

" All of my thoughts concerning Love diſcourſe,
" And in themſelves ſuch differences they have,
" That while his power one urges me to crave,
" Another madly would diſpute his force.
" One hoping, oft conveys to me delight;
" Another makes me oftentimes lament;
" Only in ſeeking Pity they conſent,
" Trembling with terrors that my heart affright.
" Thus know I not from which my courſe to take;
" I wiſh to ſpeak, and know not what to ſay;
" In ſuch perplexities of love I live.
" And if to reconcile my thoughts I ſtrive,
" I needs unto my very foe muſt pray,
" The Lady Pity, my defence to make."

After the battle of the different thoughts it happened one day that Dante was taken, by a friend who thought to give him pleaſure, to a feaſt at which many ladies were preſent. " They were aſſembled," he ſays, " to attend a lady who " was married that day, and, according to the cuſtom of the " city, they bore her company at her firſt ſitting at table " in the dwelling of her new huſband." Dante, believing thus to do pleaſure to his friend, propoſed to ſtand in waiting upon theſe ladies. But at the moment of this intention he felt a ſudden tremor, which made him lean for ſupport againſt a painting that ran round the wall,[18] " and " fearing," he ſays, " leſt my trembling ſhould be obſerved by

" by others, I raiſed my eyes and looking at the ladies ſaw " among them the moſt gentle Beatrice. Then were my " ſpirits ſo overwhelmed by the force that Love gathered, " on ſeeing himſelf in ſuch neighborhood to this moſt gentle " lady, that none remained in life except the ſpirits of ſight, " and even they remained outſide of their inſtrument, ſince " Love wiſhed to ſtand in their moſt honorable place to look " upon this admirable lady. And although I was changed " from what I was before, I grieved much for theſe little ſpir- " its who lamented bitterly and ſaid, 'If he ſo like a thunder- " bolt had not ſmitten us from our place we might ſtand to " gaze upon the marvel of this lady as do others our peers.' " I ſay that many of theſe ladies perceiving my transfigura- " tion began to wonder, and talking with this moſt gentle " lady made a mock of me. Therefore my friend in good " faith who had been deceived, took me by the hand and " leading me out from the preſence of theſe ladies, aſked me " what was the matter with me. Then having ſomewhat " repoſed, and my dead ſpirits being revived, and thoſe that " were driven out having returned to their poſſeſſions, I ſaid " to this my friend, theſe words,—'I have ſet my feet on " that edge of life beyond which no man can go with in- " tent to return.'" Thereupon leaving his friend, Dante went to the chamber of tears, weeping and aſhamed; and in his trouble he wrote a ſonnet to Beatrice, in which he ſays, that, if ſhe had known the cauſe of his trouble, he believes that ſhe would have felt pity for him.[19]

The foregoing paſſage, like many others in the *Vita Nuova*

Nuova, is full of the intenſe and exaggerated expreſſions of paſſionate feeling. But this feeling is recorded with a frank ſimplicity which carries conviction of the ſincerity of emotion. It may be laughed at, but it cannot be doubted. It is poſſible, though hardly probable, that the ſcene took place at the wedding feſtival of Beatrice herſelf. She was married ſometime previous to 1287, and unleſs a reference to the event be found here, no notice of it is taken by Dante in what he has written concerning her. That the fact of her marriage changed in no degree the feeling with which Dante regarded her is plain. His love was of no low quality, to be altered by earthly circumſtance. It was a love of the ſoul. No change or ſeparation that left the eſſence untouched could wean or part him from it. To the marriage of true ſouls there was no impediment, and he would admit none, in her being the wife of another. The qualities which ſhe poſſeſſed as a maiden belonged to her no leſs as a wife.

It was in 1291, and before the *Vita Nuova* was completed, that Dante himſelf was married to Gemma dei Donati. There are ſtories that their married life was unhappy. But theſe ſtories have not even the weight of contemporary goſſip. Poſſibly they aroſe from the fact of the long ſeparation between Dante and his wife during his exile. Boccaccio inſinuates more than he aſſerts concerning their domeſtic infelicity, and concludes a vague declamation about the miſeries of married life with the words, "Truly I do not "affirm that theſe things happened to Dante, *for I do not know*."

"*know.*" Dante keeps utter ſilence in his works,—certainly giving no reaſon to ſuppoſe that domeſtic trials were added to his other burdens. One thing is known which deſerves remembrance,—that, when, after ſome years, a daughter was born to him, the name which ſhe received was Beatrice.

But to return to the narrative of the *Vita Nuova*. Soon after the ſcene of his diſcomfiture in the preſence of Beatrice, Dante relates that a ſtrong thought came to him, which ſeldom left him, but on the contrary conſtantly reproved him, and held this diſcourſe with him: "Since "when thou art near this lady, the ſight of her brings "thee only ſcorn, why, then, doſt thou ſeek to ſee her? "Behold, if ſhe were to put this queſtion to thee, what "wouldſt thou have to anſwer, even ſuppoſing that all thy "faculties were free, ſo that thou couldſt anſwer her? "And to this another humble thought replied, and ſaid: "If I did not loſe my faculties, and were free ſo that I "could anſwer, I would ſay to her, that as ſoon as I pic-"ture to myſelf her wonderful beauty, at once a deſire to "ſee her comes to me, which is of ſuch great force that it "kills and deſtroys in my memory that which might riſe "againſt it, and, therefore, paſt ſufferings do not hold me "back from ſeeking to ſee her. Wherefore, moved by ſuch "thoughts, I propoſed to ſpeak certain words, in which "excuſing myſelf to her from blame on this account, I "might alſo ſet down what happened to me in her preſ-"ence, and I ſaid this ſonnet: —

That

" That which oppoſes in my mind doth die
" Whene'er, oh beauteous Joy, I win thy ſight;
" And I hear Love when I to you am nigh,
" Who ſays, 'Depart, if death doth thee affright.'
" My face the color of my heart diſplays,
" Which, fainting, any chance ſupport doth ſeek;
" And, as I tremble in my drunken daze,
" 'Die! die!' the very ſtones appear to ſhriek.
" Sin he commits who then may look on me,
" If my alarmed ſoul he doth not aid,
" At leaſt by ſhowing that he feeleth grief
" For that deep woe, which you deriding ſee,
" And which is in the dying look diſplayed,
" Of eyes that long in death for their relief."

After this, Dante tells of other thoughts which came to his mind concerning his appearance when in preſence of his lady; but paſſing over theſe, we come to a paſſage which contains a delightful picture from Florence in its old time, and many ſentences of ſweet and characteriſtic feeling.

" Many perſons had now learned from my looks the " ſecret of my heart. And it happened that certain ladies, " who well knew my heart, each of them having witneſſed " many of my diſcomfitures, had aſſembled together, tak- " ing pleaſure in each other's company. And I, by chance " paſſing near them, was addreſſed by one of theſe gentle " ladies. She who called to me was very graceful in her " ſpeech, ſo that when I drew nigh to them, and ſaw well " that my moſt gentle lady was not with them, reaſſuring myſelf,

" myſelf, I ſaluted them, and aſked what might be their " pleaſure. The ladies were many, and ſome of them were " laughing together, and others looked at me, waiting for " what I might ſay, while others ſpoke among themſelves, " and one of them, turning her eyes toward me, and calling " me by name, ſaid, 'To what end doſt thou love this lady, " ſince thou canſt not ſupport her preſence? Tell us, " for it is certain that the aim of ſuch a love muſt be a " very ſtrange one.' And when ſhe had ſaid theſe words " to me, not only ſhe, but all the others, began to attend " in expectation of my reply. Then I ſaid to them, 'La- " dies, the aim of my love was, in truth, the ſalutation " of that lady of whom perhaps you ſpeak; and in that " dwelt the bliſs which was the end of all my deſires. " But ſince it has pleaſed her to deny it to me, my lord " Love, thanks be to him, has placed all my bliſs in that " which cannot fail me.' Then theſe ladies began to " ſpeak together, and, as we ſometimes ſee rain falling " mingled with beautiful ſnow, ſo, it ſeemed to me, I " ſaw their words mingled with ſighs. And after they had " ſpoken for ſome time among themſelves, the ſame lady " who had firſt ſpoken to me ſaid to me, 'We pray thee " that thou wouldſt tell us in what conſiſts this thy bliſs.' " And I, replying to her, ſaid, 'In thoſe words which ſpeak " my lady's praiſe.' And ſhe anſwered, 'If thou ſayeſt " truth in this, thoſe words which thou haſt ſpoken con- " cerning thine own condition muſt have been written " with another intention.'[20] Then I, thinking on theſe words,

" words, and, as it were, aſhamed of myſelf, departed from " them, and went, ſaying to myſelf, 'Since there is ſuch " bliſs in thoſe words which praiſe my lady, why has my " ſpeech been of aught else?' And I propoſed to take " always for my ſubject, henceforward, the praiſe of this " moſt gentle lady. And thinking much on this, I ſeemed " to myſelf to have undertaken too lofty a ſubject for my " power, ſo that I did not dare to begin. Thus I delayed " ſome days, with the deſire to ſpeak, and with a fear of " beginning.

" Then it happened, that, walking along a road, at the " ſide of which ran a very clear ſtream, ſo great a wiſh to " ſpeak came to me, that I began to think on the method I " ſhould obſerve; and I thought that to ſpeak of her would " not be becoming, unleſs I addreſſed my words to ladies,— " and not to every lady, but only to thoſe who are gentle, " and not mere women.[21] Then I ſay that my tongue " ſpoke as if moved by its own accord, and ſaid, 'Ladies " who have intelligence of Love.' Theſe words I laid by " in my mind with great joy, thinking to take them for my " beginning. And having returned to the city, after ſome " days of thought I began this Canzone: —[22]

" Ladies who have intelligence of Love,
" I of my lady wiſh with you to ſpeak;
" Not that to tell her praiſe in full I think,
" But to diſcourſe that I may eaſe my mind.
" I ſay that when I think upon her worth,
" So ſweet doth Love make himſelf feel to me,

That

" That if I then did not my courage loſe,
" Speaking I would enamor all mankind.
" I do not wiſh ſo loftily to ſpeak,
" Leſt I ſhould fail and fall through very fear.
" But of her gentle nature I will treat
" With lighteſt touch compared with her deſert,
" Ladies and damſels bound to Love, with you;
" For unto others this may not be told.
" An Angel cries aloud in tongue divine,
" And ſays, 'O Sire! on earth is to be ſeen
" A miracle in action, that proceeds
" From out a ſoul which far as here doth ſhine.'
" The Heavens, which have no other want, indeed,
" But that of her, demand her of her Lord,
" And every Saint doth for this favor beg;
" Only Compaſſion doth our part defend.
" For, ſayeth God, (who for my Lady cares,)
" 'O my elect, now be content in peace
" That, while I pleaſe, your hope ſhould there remain
" Where dwelleth one who loſs of her awaits,
" And who ſhall ſay in Hell to the foredoomed,
" 'I have beheld the hope of thoſe in bliſs.'"[23]
" My lady is deſired in higheſt heaven.
" Her virtues now will I make known to you.
" I ſay, whoſo a gentle lady would appear
" Should go with her: for when ſhe paſſeth by,
" Love caſts a froſt upon all caitiff hearts,
" So that their every thought doth freeze and die;
" And who could bear to ſtay and look on her
" Would nobler thing become or elſe would die;
" And when one finds that he may worthy be
" To look on her, he doth his virtue prove;
" For then that comes to him which gives him health,

And

" And humbleth him till he forgets all wrong ;
" And God hath giv'n her yet a greater grace,
" That who hath ſpoke with her cannot end ill.
" Love ſays of her, ' A thing of mortal birth
" How can it be ſo beautiful and pure ? '
" Then, gazing on her, to himſelf he ſwears
" That God in her a new creation means.
" Color of pearl doth clothe her, as it were, —
" Not in exceſs, but moſt becomingly.
" Whate'er of good Nature can make ſhe is ;
" And by her pattern Beauty tries itſelf.
" From out her eyes, wherever ſhe them turns,
" Spirits inflamed with love do iſſue forth,
" Which ſtrike the eyes of whoſo looks on her,
" And enter ſo that every heart they find.
" Love you behold depicted in her ſmile,
" Whereon with ſteadfaſt eyes no one can look.
" I know, Canzone, thou wilt go to ſpeak
" With many ladies, when I ſend thee forth ;
" And now I bid thee, having bred thee up
" Like to a young and ſimple child of Love,
" That where thou goeſt thou ſhouldſt praying ſay,
" ' Teach me which way to go, for I am ſent
" To her with praiſe of whom I am adorned.'
" And if thou wiſheſt not to go in vain,
" Remain not there where villain folk may be ;
" Endeavor, if thou mayſt, to be acquaint
" Only with ladies, or with courteous men,
" Who thee will guide upon the quickeſt way.
" Love thou wilt find in company with her,
" And to them both commend me as thou ſhouldſt."

After explaining, and marking the diviſions of this poem, ſomewhat

ſomewhat more at length than his wont, Dante copies out a ſonnet in which he anſwers the queſtion of one of his friends, who, he ſays, perhaps entertaining an expectation of him beyond what was due, aſked him, "What is Love?" Many of the poets of that time tried their hands in giving an anſwer to this difficult queſtion,* and Dante begins his with confirming the opinion expreſſed by one of them: —

"Love is but one thing with the gentle heart,
"As in the ſaying of the ſage we find." [21]

Another ſonnet follows upon this, telling how this Love was awakened by Beatrice. It begins with exquiſite praiſe: —

"Within her eyes my Lady beareth Love,
"So that who looks on her is gentle made.
"All toward her turn where'er her path is laid,
"And whom ſhe greets his heart doth trembling move;
"So that with face caſt down, all pale to view,
"For every fault of his he then doth ſigh.
"Anger and pride away before her fly;
"Aid me, oh Ladies, pay her honor due.
"All ſweetneſs truly, every humble thought,
"The heart of him who hears her ſpeak doth hold.
"Thus he is bleſſed who may ſee her awhile;
"But what ſhe ſeems when ſhe doth partly ſmile
"Cannot be kept in mind, cannot be told,
"Such new and noble miracle is wrought."

Not

* See Appendix D. — Tranſlation of Guido Cavalcanti's Canzone: "*Donna mi priega.*"

Not many days after this, on the 31ſt of December, 1289, the father of Beatrice died. "And inaſmuch as it is the "cuſtom in the above-mentioned city for ladies to aſſemble "with ladies, and men with men, in ſuch affliction, many "ladies aſſembled at the houſe where Beatrice was weeping "piteouſly. And ſeeing certain of them returning from "her, I heard them ſpeak of this moſt gentle lady, how ſhe "was bewailing herſelf. . . . . When theſe ladies had "paſſed, I remained in ſuch grief that tears began to fall, "and, putting my hands before my eyes, I covered my face. "And if it had not been that I expected to hear further of "her, for I ſtood near by where moſt of the ladies who came "from her paſſed, I ſhould have hidden myſelf as ſoon as "the tears aſſailed me. While I ſtill delayed, more ladies "paſſed by, talking together and ſaying, 'Who of us ſhould "ever be joyful after hearing this lady ſpeak ſo piteouſly?' "After theſe, others paſſed, who ſaid, as they went by, "'This one who is here weeps neither more nor leſs than "if he had ſeen her as we have.' And then others ſaid of "me, 'See! ſo overcome is he, that he ſeems not himſelf.' "And thus theſe ladies paſſing by, I heard ſpeech of her and "of myſelf." And going away, after this, he wrote two ſonnets, telling of what he had ſeen and heard.[25]

It happened not long after this time that Dante was ſeized with grievous illneſs, which reduced him to ſuch a ſtate of weakneſs that he lay as one unable to move. And on the ninth day, ſuffering greatly, he thought of his lady, and, reflecting on the frailty of life even at its beſt, the thought

thought ſtruck him that even the moſt gentle Beatrice muſt at ſome time die. And upon this, ſuch conſternation ſeized him that his fancy began to wander, and, he ſays, "It "ſeemed to me that I ſaw ladies, with hair diſhevelled, and "marvellouſly ſad, paſs weeping by, and that I ſaw the ſun "grow dark, ſo that the ſtars ſhowed themſelves of ſuch a "color as to make me deem they wept. And it appeared "to me that the birds as they flew fell dead, and that there "were great earthquakes. And in that fantaſy marvelling, "and a great fear falling on me, I imagined that a friend "came to me, who ſaid, 'Doſt thou not know? Thy "wondrous lady has departed from this world.' Then I "began to weep very piteouſly, and wept not only in im-"agination, but with my eyes, bathing them with real tears. "Then I imagined that I looked toward heaven, and it "ſeemed to me that I ſaw a multitude of angels who were "returning upwards, having before them a little cloud of "exceeding whiteneſs. It ſeemed to me that theſe angels "ſang glorioufly, and that the words of their ſong were "theſe: '*Oſanna in excelſis!*'—and other than theſe I "did not hear.[26]

"Then the heart in which abode ſuch great love ſeemed "to ſay to me, 'True is it that our lady lieth dead.' And "thereupon I ſeemed to go to behold the body in which "that moſt noble and bleſſed ſoul had been. And the "erring fancy was ſo ſtrong that it ſhowed to me this "lady dead, and it appeared to me that ladies were covering "her head with a white veil, and that her face had ſuch

an

"an aſpect of humility that it ſeemed to ſay, 'I behold the "beginning of peace.'"

Then Dante called upon Death to come to him; and when he had beheld in his imagination the ſad myſteries which are performed for the dead, he ſeemed to return to his own chamber. And ſo ſtrong was his imagining, that, weeping, he ſaid with his true voice, "O moſt beautiful "ſoul! how is he bleſſed who beholds thee!" Upon this, a young and gentle lady, who was watching by his bed, thinking that he was grieving for his own pain, began to weep; whereon other ladies who were in the chamber drew near and rouſed him from his dream. Then they aſked him by what he had been troubled; and he told all that he had ſeen in fancy, keeping ſilence only with regard to the name of Beatrice; and when, ſome time after, he recovered from his illneſs, he wrote a poem which related his viſion.*

"A lady piteous, in the prime of years,
"And graced full well with ſweet humanity,
"Who, when I called on Death, was preſent there,
"Beholding how my eyes were filled with tears,
"And hearing the vain words that fell from me,
"Sobbing, was moved with fear my woe to ſhare.
"And other ladies, of my grief made ware
"Through her who ſo did take it to her heart,
"Conſtrained her to depart,
"And, to arouſe me, then drew near my bed;

And

* For the following admirable tranſlation of this Canzone I am indebted to my friend the Reverend C. T. Brooks.

See Appendix B. — "Structure of the *Vita Nuova*."

" And ' Sleep no more ! ' one ſaid ;
" Another : ' Why ſo vex thy ſoul with care ? '
" Whereon, from that ſtrange fancy I did ſtart,
" Calling my lady's name with keeneſt ſmart.
" With ſuch a dolorous voice I called that name,
" So choked with tears and ſo with anguiſh broke,
" That I alone knew what it was I ſaid ;
" And with a look betraying all the ſhame
" That to my face had ruſhed the while I ſpoke,
" Love made me toward thoſe ladies turn my head ;
" And ſuch the color that my face o'erſpread,
" It made them think of death to ſee me ſo.
" ' Ah ! comfort we his woe,'
" They ſaid to one another tenderly ;
" And oft they ſaid to me :
" ' What haſt thou ſeen that all thy ſtrength is fled ? '
" When I a little comforted did grow,
" Then ſaid I, ' Ladies, you the truth ſhall know.'—
" The while I thought upon this life of mine,
" And ſaw how frail it was and ſhort of ſtay,
" Love wept where in my heart his dwelling lies,
" Whereat my ſoul within me did ſo pine,
" That, ſighing, I began in thought to ſay :
" ' It well may be that now my lady dies.'
" And then ſuch woe fell on me, that my eyes
" Were cloſed, and to the earth ſeemed ſunk wellnigh ;
" And ſo diſmayed thereby
" My ſpirits were, that each went wandering ;
" And then imagining
" Things beyond knowing, mereſt falſities,
" Viſions of woful dames, methought, drew nigh,
" Who ſaid to me : ' Now thou ſhalt die, ſhalt die ! '
" Then ſaw I many dubious portents there,

Where

" Where I had entered on vain fancy's grounds;
" I ſeemed to be I know not in what place;
" Ladies paſſed by me with diſhevelled hair,
" Some weeping, others uttering woful ſounds,
" Who darted fires of ſadneſs into ſpace;
" And then I ſeemed to ſee, with gradual pace,
" The ſun eclipſed, the ſtar beam out o'erhead;
" This wept, and that, for dread;
" Birds fell from out the air in middle flight,
" Earth quaked, and to my ſight
" A man appeared, hoarſe and with livid face.
" ' What doſt thou? Knowſt thou not the news?' he ſaid,
" ' Thy lady, ſhe who was ſo fair, is dead!'
" My eyes, all bathed in tears, I lifted ſad,
" And ſaw, what ſeemed to me a rain of manna,
" The angels who toward Heaven were on their way,
" And who a little cloud before them had,
" Shouting behind it as they roſe: ' Hoſanna!'
" More had they ſaid, I that to you would ſay.
" Then Love ſaid: ' Thou ſhalt know all to-day;
" Come and behold where lies our lady bleſt.'
" The viſion's high beheſt
" Conducted me to ſee my lady dead;
" And following where it led,
" I ſaw that ladies veiled her as ſhe lay:
" Such true humility her look confeſſed,
" It ſeemed as if ſhe ſaid 'I am at reſt.'
" So lowly grew I in my ſorrowing,
" Seeing in her ſuch lowlineſs expreſt,
" I ſaid: ' O Death, henceforth I hold thee dear;
" Thou oughteſt now to be a gentle thing,
" Since thou art lodged within my lady's breaſt;
" Thou ſhouldſt be piteous now and not ſevere.

Lo!

" Lo! ſo deſirous thou beholdſt me here
" To be of thine, like thine my aſpect is.
" Come, nor my prayer diſmiſs.'
" Then I departed, ſorrow's work all done;
" And, when I was alone,
" Looked to the realm above this earthly ſphere,
" And ſaid, ' Fair ſoul, who ſees thee is in bliſs!'
" — You called me then, be yours my thanks for this!' "

The next incident of his new life which Dante tells is one of a different nature, and of pleaſant character. One day he ſaw Love coming to him full of joy; and his own heart became ſo joyful that it ſeemed to him it could not be his heart, ſo changed was its condition. And, after ſome happy words, which, he ſays, " my heart ſaid to me with " the tongue of Love, I ſaw coming towards me a gentle " lady, who was of famous beauty, and who had now long " been the lady of my firſt friend. And the name of this " lady was Giovanna, but on account of her beauty, as " ſome believe, the name of Primavera [Spring] had been " given to her, and thus ſhe was called. And near to her, " as I looked, I beheld the wondrous Beatrice coming. " Theſe ladies paſſed near me thus one after the other; and " it appeared to me that Love ſpoke to me in my heart, " and ſaid: ' This firſt is called Primavera only on account " of this coming of to-day; for I moved the giver of the " name to call her Primavera, that is to ſay, *prima verrà* " [ſhe ſhall come firſt], on the day that Beatrice ſhall ſhow " herſelf after the falſe imagination of her vaſſal. And if " alſo thou wilt conſider her firſt name, it has the ſame meaning

" meaning as Primavera, becauſe her name, Giovanna, is " derived from that Giovanni [John] who preceded the " true Light, ſaying, *Ego vox clamantis in deſerto: parate* " *viam Domini.* [The voice of one crying in the wilder- " neſs, Prepare ye the way of the Lord.]' And alſo it " appeared to me that he ſaid theſe other things: 'He who " ſhould conſider ſubtilely would call this Beatrice *Love*, on " account of the great reſemblance that ſhe has to me.' " Wherefore I, thinking over theſe words, propoſed to " write of them, in rhyme, to my firſt friend, (keeping " ſilence in regard to certain words, which it ſeemed ſhould " be ſuppreſſed,) for I believed that his heart ſtill admired " the beauty of this gentle Primavera; and I ſaid this " ſonnet: —

" An amorous ſpirit in my heart who lay
" I felt awaken from his ſlumber there;
" And then I ſaw Love come from far away,
" But ſcarce I knew him for his joyous air.
"'Honor to me,' he ſaid, 'think now to pay,'
" And all his words with ſmiles companioned were.
" Then did my lord a little with me ſtay,
" And on the way whence he appeared whilere
" The Lady Joan and Lady Bice I ſee,
" Coming toward the place wherein I was;
" And the two marvels ſide by ſide did move.
" Then, as my mind now tells it unto me,
" Love ſaid, 'This one is Spring, and this, becauſe
" She ſo reſembleth me, is naméd Love.'" [27]

After this ſonnet, Dante enters on a long and fanciful diſcourſe

diſcourſe on the uſe of figurative language, to explain how it is that he ſpeaks of Love as if it were not a mere notion of the intellect, but as if it had a corporeal exiſtence. He ſays: —

"It may be that ſome perſon, entitled to have every "doubt cleared away, may be perplexed at my ſpeaking "of Love as if he were an independent exiſtence, not "merely a ſubſtance of the intellect, but, on the contrary, "a corporeal ſubſtance. Which, in truth, is falſe, for Love "is not a ſubſtance in himſelf, but is an accident in ſub- "ſtance. And that I ſpeak of him as if he had a body, "and, further, as if he were a man, appears from three "things that I ſay of him. I ſay that I ſaw him come "from far off, wherefore, ſince *coming* implies a local mo- "tion, (and to be locally movable is, according to the philoſ- "opher, the attribute only of a body,) it appears that I "attribute to Love a bodily exiſtence. I ſay further of "him, that he laughed, and alſo that he ſpoke, which things "appear to be peculiar to man, eſpecially the capacity of "laughing, and thus it appears that I attribute to him the "being a man. To explain ſufficiently for the preſent oc- "caſion, it muſt firſt be underſtood that formerly there "were no writers concerning Love [*dicitori d'Amore*] in "the vulgar tongue; but certain poets in the Latin tongue "had written about Love. Among us, I ſay, (although "perhaps among other people the contrary may have hap- "pened, and ſtill happens, as, for inſtance, in Greece,) not "the vulgar, but the learned poets treated of theſe things.

And

" And no great number of years have paſſed ſince theſe " poets in the vulgar tongue firſt appeared. For to write " in rhyme in the vulgar is, after a manner, the ſame thing " as to write in verſe in Latin. And the proof that it is " but a ſhort time is, that, if we ſearch in the tongue of the " *oco*, and in the tongue of the *si*, we ſhall not find anything " written more than a hundred and fifty years before the " preſent time.[28] And the reaſon why ſome ſtupid perſons " got the fame of knowing how to write is, that they " happened to be among the firſt who wrote in the tongue " of the *si*. And the firſt who began to write as a poet in " the vulgar tongue was moved to do ſo becauſe he wiſhed " to make his words intelligible to a lady who could ill " underſtand Latin verſes. And this is againſt thoſe who " rhyme on any other ſubject than Love, ſince this mode " of ſpeech was from the beginning adopted in order to " ſpeak of Love. Wherefore, ſince a greater licenſe of " ſpeech may be granted to poets than to writers of proſe, " and theſe writers in rhyme are no other than poets uſing " the vulgar tongue, it is fitting and reaſonable that greater " licenſe of ſpeech ſhould be permitted to them than to " other writers in the vulgar tongue ; ſo that, if any figure " or rhetorical coloring be allowed to poets, it is allowed " alſo to the rhymers. Thus, if we ſee that the poets have " ſpoken to inanimate things as if they had ſenſe and rea- " ſon, and have made them ſpeak together, and have done " this not only in reſpect to real things, but alſo things not " real, (that is, that they have ſaid of things that have no exiſtence

" exiſtence that they ſpoke, and have often made qualities " ſpeak as if they were ſubſtantial and human,) it is fitting " that the writer in rhyme ſhould do the like, not indeed " without good reaſon, but with a reaſon which it may be " poſſible afterwards to explain in proſe.

" That the poets have thus ſpoken as has been ſaid " appears from Virgil, who ſays that Juno, that is, a god- " deſs hoſtile to the Trojans, ſpake to Æolus, lord of the " winds, here in the firſt of the Æneid : *Æole, namque tibi,* " *etc. ;* and that this lord replied to her : *Tuus, O regina,* " *quid optes, etc.* In this ſame poet an inanimate thing " ſpeaks to an animate thing, in the third of the Æneid, " thus : *Dardanidæ duri, etc.* In Lucan an animate thing " ſpeaks to an inanimate, in this paſſage : *Multum, Roma,* " *tamen debes civilibus armis.* In Horace a man ſpeaks to " his own knowledge as to another perſon ; and not only " are they the words of Horace, but he ſpeaks them as the " interpreter of the good Homer, thus in his book on " Poetry : *Dic mihi, Musa, virum, etc.* In Ovid, in the " beginning of the book of the Remedy of Love, Love " ſpeaks as if he were a human perſon : *Bella mihi video,* " *bella parantur, ait.*

" And by this argument the matter may now be clear " to any one who is perplexed in any part of this my little " book. And in order that no ſtupid perſon may take " advantage of what I have ſaid, I ſay, that the poets do " not ſpeak thus without reaſon, and that thoſe who rhyme " ought not to ſpeak thus, unleſs they have ſome rational

meaning

"meaning in what they ſay; ſince it would be a great "diſgrace to him who ſhould rhyme things under the garb "of a figure or of rhetorical coloring, if afterward, being "aſked, he ſhould not know how to denude his words of "this garb, ſo as to ſhow their true meaning. And my "firſt friend and I know well thoſe who rhyme thus fool-"iſhly."

This curious digreſſion, which thus concludes with a reference to Guido Cavalcanti, ſhowing the ſympathy that exiſted between him and Dante, is a moſt ſtriking illuſtration of the infancy of the new literature, and the poverty of intellectual culture at the time when the *Vita Nuova* was written. It ſhows how little familiarity which thoſe into whoſe hands the book was likely to fall were expected to poſſeſs of the common forms of poetry, and the ſtyle of poetic thought. It tells ſomething of the courſe of Dante's reading, and lets us know ſome of the books from which he drew inſtruction in the modes of poetic diction, and in the knowledge of ancient times. Virgil was his maſter and his poet, and the four other poets to whom in this digreſſion he refers reappear in company in a familiar and magnificent ſcene in the *Divina Commedia*: —

"Quegli è Omero poeta sovrano,
"L' altro è Orazio satiro, che viene,
"Ovidio è il terzo, e l' ultimo è Lucano."

Inferno, iv. 88–90.

But returning to his narrative, he ſays: "This moſt "gentle lady, of whom there has been diſcourſe in what precedes,

" precedes, reached ſuch favor among the people, that " when ſhe paſſed along the way perſons ran to ſee her, " which gave me wonderful delight. And when ſhe was " near any one, ſuch modeſty took poſſeſſion of his heart, " that he did not dare to raiſe his eyes or to return her " ſalutation; and to this, ſhould any one doubt it, many, " as having experienced it, could bear witneſs for me. " She, crowned and clothed with humility, took her way, " diſplaying no pride in that which ſhe ſaw and heard. " Many, when ſhe had paſſed, ſaid, 'This is not a woman; " rather is ſhe one of the moſt beautiful angels of heaven.' " Others ſaid, 'She is a miracle. Bleſſed be the Lord who " can perform ſuch a marvel!' I ſay that ſhe ſhowed " herſelf ſo gentle and ſo full of all beauties, that thoſe who " looked on her felt within themſelves a pure and ſweet " delight ſuch as they could not tell in words; nor was " there any who could look at her and not feel need at firſt " to ſigh. Theſe and more wonderful things proceeded " from her, marvellouſly and with power. Wherefore I, " thinking on all this, propoſed to ſay ſome words, in which " I would exhibit her marvellous and excellent influences, " to the end that not only thoſe who might actually behold " her, but alſo others, might know of her whatever words " could tell. Then I wrote this ſonnet: —

" So gentle and ſo modeſt doth appear
" My lady when ſhe giveth her ſalute,
" That every tongue becometh trembling mute,
" Nor do the eyes to look upon her dare.

And

" And though ſhe hears her praiſes, ſhe doth go
" Benignly clothed with humility,
" And like a thing come down ſhe ſeems to be
" From heaven to earth, a miracle to ſhow.
" So pleaſeth ſhe whoever cometh nigh,
" She gives the heart a ſweetneſs through the eyes,
" Which none can underſtand who doth not prove.
" And from her lip there ſeems indeed to move
" A ſpirit ſweet and in Love's very guiſe,
" Which goeth ſaying to the ſoul, 'Ah, ſigh!'" [29]

With this incomparable ſonnet we cloſe that part of the *Vita Nuova* which relates to the life of Beatrice. It fitly completes the golden record of youth. Its tender lines are the epitaph of happy days, and in them is found that mingled ſweetneſs and ſadneſs which in this world are always the final expreſſion of love. Beneath its outward meaning lies a prophecy of joy,—but that joy is to be reached only through the gates of death.

III.

THE year 1289 was one marked in the annals of Florence and of Italy by events which are ſtill famous, ſcored by the genius of Dante upon the memory of the world. It was in this year that Count Ugolino and his ſons and grandſons were ſtarved by the Piſans in their tower priſon. A few months later, Franceſca da Rimini was murdered by her huſband. Between the dates of theſe two terrible events the Florentines had won the victory of Campaldino over their Ghibelline enemies; and thus, in this ſhort ſpace, the materials had been given to the poet for the two beſt-known and moſt powerful ſtories and for one of the moſt ſtriking epiſodes of the *Divina Commedia*.

In the great and hard-fought battle of Campaldino Dante himſelf took part. "I was at firſt greatly afraid," he ſays, in a letter of which but a few ſentences have been preſerved,[30]—"but at the end I felt the greateſt joy,—according to the various chances of the battle." When the victorious army returned to Florence, a ſplendid proceſſion, with the clergy at its head, with the arts of the city each under its banner, and with all manner of pomp, went out to meet it. There were long-continued feaſts and rejoicings. The battle had been fought on the 11th of June, the day of St. Barnabas, and the Republic, though already

already engaged in magnificent works of church-building, decreed that a new church ſhould be erected in honor of the Saint on whoſe day the victory had been won.

A little later in that ſummer, Dante was one of a troop of Florentines who joined the forces of Lucca in levying war upon the Piſan territory. The ſtronghold of Caprona was taken, and Dante was preſent at its capture; for he ſays, "I ſaw the foot-ſoldiers, who, having made terms, "came out from Caprona, afraid when they beheld them-"ſelves among ſo many enemies."[31] *Inferno*, xxi. 94–96.

Thus, during a great part of the ſummer of 1289, Dante was in active ſervice as a ſoldier. He was no loveſick idler, no mere home-keeping writer of verſes, but was already taking his part in the affairs of the ſtate which he was afterwards to be called on for a time to aſſiſt in governing, and he was laying up thoſe ſtores of experience which were to ſerve as the material out of which his vivifying imagination was to form the great national poem of Italy. But of this active life, of theſe perſonal engagements, of theſe terrible events which took ſuch ſtrong poſſeſſion of his ſoul, there is no word, no ſuggeſtion even, in the book of his New Life. In it there is no echo, however faint, of thoſe ſtorms of public violence and private paſſion which broke dark over Italy. In the midſt of the tumults which ſprang from the jealouſies of rival ſtates, from the internal diſcords of cities, from the diviſions of parties, from the bitterneſs of domeſtic quarrels,—the current of Dante's love flowed deep and ſtill, reflecting only

only the clouds or the ſunſhine that were within his heart, unruffled by the winds of earth. The ſtory of the New Life is a narrative of abſorbing perſonal emotions, told as if the world were the abode of tenderneſs and peace. No external excitements could break into the inner chambers of Dante's heart to diſturb the love that dwelt within them. The contraſt between the purity and the ſerenity of the *Vita Nuova* and the coarſeneſs and cruelty of the deeds that were going on in Italy while it was being written is complete. Every man in ſome ſort leads a double life, — one real and his own, the other ſeeming and the world's, — but with few is the ſeparation ſo entire as it was with Dante.

But in theſe troubled times the New Life was drawing to its cloſe. The ſpring of 1290 had come, and the poet, now twenty-five years old, ſixteen years having paſſed ſince he firſt beheld Beatrice, was engaged in writing a poem to tell what effect the virtue of his lady wrought upon him. He had written but the following portion when it was broken off, never to be reſumed: —

"So long hath Love retained me at his heſt,
"And to his ſway hath ſo accuſtomed me,
"That as at firſt he cruel uſed to be,
"So in my heart he now doth ſweetly reſt.
"Thus when by him my ſtrength is diſpoſſeſſed,
"So that the ſpirits ſeem away to flee,
"My frail ſoul feels ſuch ſweetneſs verily,
"That with it pallor doth my face inveſt.
"Then Love o'er me ſuch maſtery doth ſeize,

He

" He makes my ſighs in words to take their way,
" And they unto my lady go to pray
" That ſhe to give me further grace would pleaſe.
" Where'er ſhe ſees me, this to me occurs,
" Nor can it be believed what humbleneſs is hers."

" ' *Quomodo ſedet ſola civitas plena populo! facta eſt quaſi* " *vidua domina gentium!* '

" I was yet full of the deſign of this Canzone, and had " finiſhed the above ſtanza of it, when the Lord of juſtice " called this moſt gentle one to glory under the banner of " that holy Queen Mary whoſe name was ever ſpoken with " greateſt reverence by this bleſſed Beatrice.[32]

" And although it might be pleaſing, were I now to tell " ſomewhat of her departure from us, it is not my intention " to treat of it here, for three reaſons. The firſt is, that it " is no part of the preſent deſign, as may be ſeen in the " proem of this little book. The ſecond is, that, ſuppoſing " it were ſo, my pen would not be ſufficient to treat of it " in a fitting manner. The third is, that, ſuppoſing both " the one and the other, it would not be becoming in me " to treat of it, ſince, in doing ſo, I ſhould be obliged to " praiſe myſelf, — a thing altogether blameworthy in who- " ſoever does it, — and therefore I leave this ſubject to ſome " other narrator.

" Nevertheleſs, ſince in what precedes there has been " frequent occaſion to make mention of the number nine,[33] " for which, it would ſeem, there muſt be ſome reaſon, and

"and ſince in her departure this number ſeemed to "occupy a large place, it is fitting to ſay ſomething on "this point, ſeeing that it ſeems to belong to my deſign. "Wherefore I will firſt tell how it had place in her depart- "ure, and then I will aſſign ſome reaſon why this number "was ſo friendly to her. I ſay, that, according to the mode "of reckoning in Italy, her moſt noble ſoul departed in the "firſt hour of the ninth day of the month; and according "to the reckoning in Syria, ſhe departed in the ninth "month of the year, ſince the firſt month there is Tiſmim, "which with us is October. And according to our reck- "oning, ſhe departed in that year of our indiction, that is, "of the years of the Lord, in which the perfect number "was completed for the ninth time in that century in "which ſhe had been ſet in the world; and ſhe was of "the Chriſtians of the thirteenth century.[34]

"One reaſon why this number was ſo friendly to her "may have been this: ſince, according to Ptolemy and "the Chriſtian truth, there are nine heavens which move, "and, according to the common aſtrological opinion, theſe "heavens work effects here below according to their rela- "tive poſitions, this number was her friend, to the end "that it might be underſtood that at her generation all "the nine movable heavens were in moſt perfect conjunc- "tion.[35] This is one reaſon; but conſidering more ſub- "tilely and according to infallible truth, this number was "ſhe herſelf,—I ſpeak in a ſimilitude, and I mean as fol- "lows. The number three is the root of nine, ſince,

without

" without any other number, multiplied by itſelf, it makes " nine,—as we ſee plainly that three times three are nine. " Then, if three is the factor [*fattore*] by itſelf of nine, " and the Author [*Fattore*] of Miracles by himſelf is three, " —Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, who are three and one,— " this lady was accompanied by the number nine that it " might be underſtood that ſhe was a nine, that is, a mira- " cle, whoſe only root is the marvellous Trinity. Perhaps " a more ſubtile perſon might diſcover ſome more ſubtile " reaſon for this; but this is the one that I ſee for it, and " which pleaſes me the beſt."

After thus treating of the number nine in its connection with Beatrice, Dante goes on to ſay, that, when this moſt gentle lady had gone from this world, the city appeared widowed and deſpoiled of every dignity; whereupon he wrote to the princes of the earth an account of its condition, beginning with the words of Jeremiah which he quoted at the entrance of this new matter.[36] The remainder of this letter he does not give, becauſe it was in Latin, and in this work it was his intention, from the beginning, to write only in the vulgar tongue; and ſuch was the underſtanding of the friend for whom he writes,—that friend being, no doubt, Guido Cavalcanti, whom Dante has already ſpoken of as the firſt among his friends. Then ſucceeds a Canzone lamenting the death of Beatrice, which, inſtead of being followed by a verbal expoſition, as is the caſe with all the previous poems, is preceded by the expoſition, in order that it may ſeem, as it were, deſolate and

like

like a widow at its end. And this arrangement is preſerved in regard to all the remaining poems in the little volume. In this poem he ſays that the Eternal Sire called Beatrice to himſelf, becauſe he ſaw that this world was not worthy of ſuch a gentle thing; and he ſays of his own life, that no tongue could tell what it has been ſince his lady went away to heaven.[37]

About this time, Dante tells us, a perſon who ſtood to him in friendſhip next to his firſt friend, and who was of the cloſeſt relationſhip to his glorious lady, ſo that we may believe it was her brother, came to him and prayed him to write ſomething on a lady who was dead. Dante, believing that he meant the bleſſed Beatrice, accordingly wrote for him a ſonnet; and then, reflecting that ſo ſhort a poem appeared but a poor and bare ſervice for one who was ſo nearly connected with her, added to it two ſtanzas of a Canzone, and gave both poems to him. The beauty of his lady had now, he tells us, become a ſpiritual beauty ſpreading through heaven a light of Love.

It happened, that, "on that day which completed a year "ſince this lady was made one of the citizens of eternal "life, I was ſeated in a place where, remembering her, I "drew an Angel upon certain tablets. And while I was "drawing it, I turned my eyes, and ſaw at my ſide certain "men to whom it was becoming to do honor, and who "were looking at what I did; and, as was afterwards told "me, they had been there now ſome time before I per-"ceived them. When I ſaw them, I roſe, and, ſaluting them,

" them, ſaid, ' Another was juſt now with me, and on that " account I was in thought.' When theſe perſons had " gone, I returned to my work, that is, to drawing figures " of Angels ; and while doing this, a thought came to me " of ſaying words in rhyme, as for an anniverſary poem for " her, and of addreſſing them to thoſe who had come to " me. Then I ſaid this ſonnet, which has two begin- " nings : —

" FIRST BEGINNING.

" Unto my mind remembering had come
" The gentle lady, with ſuch pure worth graced,
" That by the Lord Moſt High ſhe had been placed
" Within the heaven of peace, where Mary hath her home."

" SECOND BEGINNING.

" Unto my mind had come, indeed, in thought,
" That gentle one for whom Love's tears are ſhed,
" Juſt at the time when, by his power led,
" To ſee what I was doing you were brought.
" Love, who within my mind did her perceive,
" Was rouſed awake within my waſted heart,
" And ſaid unto my ſighs, ' Go forth ! depart ! '
" Whereon each one in grief did take its leave.
" Lamenting they from out my breaſt did go,
" And uttering a voice that often led
" The grievous tears unto my ſaddened eyes.
" But thoſe which iſſued with the greateſt woe,
" ' O noble ſoul,' they in departing ſaid,
" ' To-day makes up the year ſince thou to heaven didſt riſe ! ' "

The preceding paſſage is one of peculiar intereſt, as illustrating

trating the perſonal taſtes of Dante, and the common modes of his life. "I was drawing," he ſays, "the figure of an Angel"; and this ſtatement is the more noticeable, becauſe Giotto, the man who ſet painting on its modern courſe, was not yet old enough to have exerciſed any influence upon Dante.[38] The friendſhip which afterwards exiſted between them had its beginning at a later period. At this time Cimabue ſtill held the field. This great artiſt often painted angels around the figures of the Virgin and her Child; and in his moſt famous picture, in the Church of Sta. Maria Novella, there are certain angels of which Vaſari ſays, with truth, that, though painted in the Greek manner, they ſhow an approach toward the modern ſtyle of drawing. Theſe angels may well have ſeemed beautiful to eyes accuſtomed to the hard unnaturalneſs of earlier works. The love of Art pervaded Florence, and a nature ſo ſenſitive and ſo ſympathetic as Dante's could not but partake of it in the fulleſt meaſure. Art was then no adjunct of ſentimentaliſm, no encourager of idleneſs. It was connected with all that was moſt ſerious and all that was moſt delightful in life. It is difficult, indeed, to appreciate the earneſtneſs with which painting, the lateſt of the arts to feel the breath of the revival, was followed, or to realize the delight which it gave, when it ſeemed, as by a miracle, to fling off the winding-ſheet that had long wrapped its ſtiffened limbs, and to come forth with new and unexampled life.

The ſtrength and the intelligence of Dante's love of Art are

are ſhown in many beautiful paſſages and alluſions in the *Divina Commedia*. There was ſomething of univerſality, not only in his imagination, but alſo in his acquiſitions. Of the ſources of learning which were then open, there was not one which he had not viſited; of the fountains of inſpiration, not one out of which he had not drunk. All the arts — poetry, painting, ſculpture, and muſic — were alike dear to him. His Canzoni were written to be ſung; and one of the moſt charming ſcenes in the great poem is that in which is deſcribed his meeting with his friend Caſella, the muſician, who ſang to him one of his own Canzoni ſo ſweetly, that "the ſweetneſs ſtill within "me ſounds."[39] "Dante took great delight in muſic, and "was an excellent draughtſman," ſays Aretino, his ſecond biographer; and Boccaccio reports, that in his youth he took great pleaſure in muſic, and was the friend of all the beſt muſicians and ſingers of his time.

In the whole range of literature, no nobler homage to Art is perhaps to be found than that contained in the tenth and twelfth cantos of the *Purgatory*, in which Dante repreſents the Creator himſelf as uſing its means to impreſs the leſſons of truth upon thoſe whoſe ſouls were being purified through repentance for the final attainment of heaven. The paſſages are too long for extract; and though their wonderful beauty may well tempt us to linger over them, we muſt return to the courſe of the ſtory of Dante's life, as it appears in the concluding pages of the *New Life*.

Some

Some time after the firſt anniverſary of Beatrice's death, Dante happened to be in a place which recalled the paſt time to him ſo that he was filled with grief. While ſtanding here, he raiſed his eyes and ſaw a young and beautiful lady looking out from a window compaſſionately upon his ſad aſpect. The tenderneſs of her look moved him to weep, and, afraid of ſhowing his weakneſs, he withdrew to hide his tears. But many times afterwards he ſaw her, and her face was always full of compaſſion, and pale, ſo that it reminded him of the look of his own moſt noble lady. But by degrees his eyes began to delight too much in ſeeing her; wherefore he often curſed their vanity, and eſteemed himſelf as vile, and there was a hard battle within himſelf between the remembrance of his lady and the new deſire of his eyes.

At length, he ſays, "The ſight of this lady brought me "into ſo new a condition, that I often thought of her as of "one who pleaſed me exceedingly,—and I thought of her "thus: 'This is a gentle, beautiful, young, and diſcreet "lady, and ſhe has perhaps appeared by will of Love, in "order that my life may find repoſe.' And often I thought "more amorouſly, ſo that my heart conſented in it, that is, "approved my reaſoning. And after it had thus conſented, "I, moved as if by reaſon, reflected, and ſaid to myſelf, "'Ah, what thought is this that in ſo vile a way ſeeks to "conſole me, and leaves me ſcarcely any other thought?' "Then another thought roſe up and ſaid, 'Now that thou "haſt been in ſo great tribulation of Love, why wilt thou not

" not withdraw thyſelf from ſuch bitterneſs. Thou ſeeſt " that this is a ſpirit that ſets the deſires of Love before " thee, and proceeds from a place no leſs gentle than " the eyes of the lady who has ſhown herſelf ſo pitiful " toward thee.' Wherefore, I, having often thus been at " ſtrife within myſelf, wiſhed anew to ſay ſome words of it. " And as, in this battle of thoughts, thoſe which ſpoke for " her won the victory, it ſeemed to me becoming to ad- " dreſs her, and I ſaid this ſonnet, which begins, 'A gentle " thought'; and I called it *gentle* becauſe I was addreſſ- " ing a gentle lady, — nevertheleſs it was moſt vile.

" A gentle thought that of you holds diſcourſe
" Cometh now frequently with me to dwell,
" And in ſo ſweet a way of Love doth tell,
" My heart to yield unto him he doth force.
" ' Who, then, is this,' the ſoul ſays to the heart,
" ' Who cometh to bring comfort to our mind,
" Poſſeſſed with virtue of ſuch potent kind,
" That other thoughts he maketh to depart?'
" ' O ſaddened ſoul,' the heart to her replies,
" ' This is a little ſpirit freſh from Love,
" Whoſe own deſires he before me brings;
" His very life and all his power doth move
" From out of that compaſſionate one's
" Who was ſo grievéd by our ſufferings.'

" One day, about the ninth hour, there aroſe within me " a ſtrong imagination oppoſed to this adverſary of reaſon. " For I ſeemed to ſee the glorified Beatrice in that crimſon " garment in which ſhe had firſt appeared to my eyes, and ſhe

"ſhe ſeemed to me young, of the ſame age as when I firſt "ſaw her. Then I began to think of her, and, calling to "mind the paſt time in its order, my heart began to repent "bitterly of the deſire by which it had ſo vilely allowed "itſelf for ſome days to be poſſeſſed, contrary to the "conſtancy of reaſon. And this ſo wicked deſire being "expelled, all my thoughts returned to their moſt gentle "Beatrice, and I ſay that thenceforth I began to think of "her with my heart poſſeſſed utterly by ſhame, ſo that it "was often manifeſted by my ſighs; for almoſt all of them, "as they went forth, told what was diſcourſed of in my "heart, — the name of that gentleſt one, and how ſhe had "departed from us. . . . . And I wiſhed that my wicked "deſire and vain temptation might be known to be at an "end; and, that the rhymed words which I had before "written might induce no doubt, I propoſed to make a "ſonnet in which I would include what I have now told."

And with this ſonnet Dante ends the ſtory in the *Vita Nuova* of the wandering of his eyes, and the ſhort faithleſſneſs of his heart; but it is retold with variations in the *Convito*, or *Banquet*, a work written many years afterward; and in this later verſion there are ſome details which ſerve to fill out and illuſtrate the earlier narrative.* The ſame tender and refined feeling which inſpires the *Vita Nuova* gives its tone to the paſſages in which the poet

* See Appendix C. — "Inconſiſtency of ſtatements in the *Convito* with thoſe of the *Vita Nuova*."

poet recalls his youthful days and the memory of Beatrice in the work of his ſorrowful manhood. In the midſt of its ſerious and philoſophic diſcourſe, this little ſtory winds in and out its thread of perſonal recollection and of ſweet romantic ſentiment. It affords new inſight into the receſſes of Dante's heart, and exhibits the permanence of the gracious qualities of his youth.

Its opening ſentence is full of the imagery of love. "Since the death of that bleſſed Beatrice, who lives in "heaven with the angels, and on earth with my ſoul, the "ſtar of Venus had twice ſhone in the different ſeaſons "as the ſtar of morning and of evening, when that gen-"tle lady, of whom I have made mention at the cloſe "of the *New Life*, firſt appeared before my eyes accom-"panied by Love, and gained ſome place in my mind. ". . . . . And before this love could become perfect, "there aroſe a great battle between the thought that ſprang "from it and that which was oppoſed to it, and which ſtill "held the fortreſs of my mind for the glorified Beatrice." *Convito*, Tratt. ii. c. 2.

And ſo hard was this ſtruggle, and ſo painful, that Dante took refuge from it in the compoſition of a poem addreſſed to the Angelic Intelligences who move the third heaven, that is, the heaven of Venus; and it is to the expoſition of the true meaning of this Canzone that the ſecond book or treatiſe of the *Convito* is directed. In one of the later chapters he ſays, (and the paſſage is a moſt ſtriking one, from its own declaration, as well as from its relation to the

the viſion of the *Divina Commedia*,)—"The life of my "heart was wont to be a ſweet and delightful thought, "which often went to the feet of the Lord of thoſe to "whom I ſpeak, that is, to God,—for, thinking, I con- "templated the kingdom of the bleſſed. And I tell [in "my poem] the final cauſe of my mounting thither in "thought, when I ſay, 'There I beheld a lady in glory'; "[and I ſay this] in order that it may be underſtood that I "was certain, and am certain, through her gracious revela- "tion, that ſhe was in heaven, whither I in my thought "oftentimes went,—as it were, ſeized up. And the ſweet- "neſs of this thought was ſuch as to make me deſirous of "death, that I might go there where ſhe was." *Convito*, Tratt. ii. c. 8. Following upon the chapter in which this remarkable paſſage occurs is one which is chiefly occupied with a digreſſion upon the immortality of the ſoul,—and with diſcourſe upon this matter, ſays Dante, "it will be "beautiful to finiſh ſpeaking of that living and bleſſed "Beatrice, of whom I intend to ſay no more in this book. ". . . . . And I believe and affirm and am certain "that I ſhall paſs after this to another and better life, in "which that glorious lady lives of whom my ſoul was "enamored."

But it is not from the *Convito* alone that this por- tion of the *Vita Nuova* receives illuſtration. In that paſ- ſage of the *Purgatory* in which Beatrice is deſcribed as appearing in perſon to her lover for the firſt time ſince her death, ſhe addreſſes him in words of ſtern rebuke of his fickleneſs

fickleneſs and his infidelity to her memory. The whole ſcene is, perhaps, unſurpaſſed in imaginative reality; the viſion appears to have an actual exiſtence, and the poet himſelf is ſubdued by the power of his own imagination. He tells the words of Beatrice with the ſame feeling with which he would have repeated them, had they fallen on his mortal ear. His grief and ſhame are real, and there is no element of feigning in them. That in truth he had ſeemed to himſelf to liſten to and to behold what he tells, it is ſcarcely poſſible to doubt. Beatrice ſays, —

" Some while at heart my preſence kept him found:
" My girliſh eyes to his obſervance lending,
" I led him with me on the right way bound.
" When, of my ſecond age the ſteps aſcending,
" I bore my life into another ſphere,
" Then ſtole he from me, after others bending.
" When I aroſe from fleſh to ſpirit clear,
" When beauty, worthineſs, upon me grew,
" I was to him leſs pleaſing and leſs dear."

Purgatory, c. xxx. vv. 118–126. — CAYLEY'S Tranſlation.

Although Beatrice only gives utterance here to the ſelf-reproaches of Dante, we have ſeen already how fully he had atoned for the tranſient unfaithfulneſs of his heart. The remainder of the *Vita Nuova* ſhows how little ſhe had loſt of her power over him, how reverently he honored her memory, how conſtant was his love of her whom he ſhould never again ſee ſave in ſuperſenſual viſion.

" It happened," he ſays, " after this tribulation, at that time

" time when many people were going to ſee the bleſſed " image that Jeſus Chriſt left to us as the likeneſs of his " moſt beautiful countenance,[40] which my lady now be- " holds in glory,—it happened that certain pilgrims paſſed " through a ſtreet which is, as it were, in the middle of that " city where the gentleſt lady was born, lived, and died,— " and they went along, as it ſeemed to me, very penſive. " And as I thought of them, I ſaid to myſelf, 'Theſe ap- " pear to me to be pilgrims from ſome far-off place, and I " do not believe that they have even heard ſpeak of this " lady, and they know nothing of her; nay, their thoughts " are rather of other things than of her; for, perhaps, they " are thinking of their diſtant friends, whom we do not " know.' Then I ſaid to myſelf, 'I know, that, if theſe " perſons were from a neighboring region, they would ſhow " ſome ſign of trouble as they paſs through the midſt of this " grieving city.' Then again I ſaid, 'If I could hold them " awhile, I would indeed make them weep before they went " out from this city; for I would ſay words to them which " would make whoever heard them weep.' When they " had paſſed out of ſight, I propoſed to make a ſonnet in " which I would ſet forth that which I had ſaid to myſelf; " and in order that it might appear more pity-moving, I " propoſed to ſay it as if I had ſpoken to them, and I ſaid " this ſonnet, which begins, 'O pilgrims.'

" I called them *pilgrims* in the wide ſenſe of that word; " for pilgrims may be underſtood in two ways,—one wide, " and one narrow. In the wide, whoever is out of his

own

" own country is ſo far a pilgrim ; in the narrow uſe, by " pilgrim is meant he only who goes to or returns from the " houſe of St. James.[41] Moreover, it is to be known that " the people who travel in the ſervice of the Moſt High are " called by three diſtinct terms. Thoſe who go beyond " the ſea, whence often they bring back the palm, are " called *palmers*. Thoſe who go to the houſe of Galicia " are called *pilgrims*, becauſe the burial-place of St. James " was more diſtant from his country than that of any other " of the Apoſtles. And thoſe are called *romei* who go to " Rome, where theſe whom I call pilgrims were going.

" O pilgrims, who in penſive mood move ſlow,
" Thinking perchance of thoſe who abſent are,
" Say, do ye come from land away ſo far
" As your appearance ſeems to us to ſhow ?
" For ye weep not, the while ye forward go
" Along the middle of the mourning town,
" Seeming as perſons who have nothing known
" Concerning the ſad burden of her woe.
" If, through your will to hear, your ſteps ye ſtay,
" Truly my ſighing heart declares to me
" That ye ſhall afterwards depart in tears.
" For ſhe her Beatrice hath loſt ; and ye
" Shall know, the words that man of her may ſay
" Have power to make weep whoever hears."

Some time after this ſonnet was written, two ladies ſent to Dante, aſking him for ſome of his rhymes. That he might honor their requeſt, he wrote a new ſonnet and ſent it to them with two that he had previouſly compoſed. In his new

new ſonnet, he told how his thought mounted to heaven as a pilgrim, and beheld his lady in ſuch condition of glory as could not be comprehended by his intellect; for our intellect, in regard to the ſouls of the bleſſed, is as weak as our eyes are to the ſun. But though he could not clearly ſee where his thought led him, at leaſt he underſtood that his thought told of his lady in glory.

" Beyond the ſphere that wideſt orbit hath
" Paſſeth the ſigh that iſſues from my heart;
" A new intelligence Love doth impart
" In tears to him, which leads him on his path.
" When at the wiſhed-for place his flight he ſtays,
" A lady he beholds, in honor dight,
" And ſhining ſo, that, through her ſplendid light,
" The pilgrim ſpirit upon her doth gaze.
" He ſees her ſuch that his reporting words
" I underſtand not, for he ſpeaketh low
" And ſtrange to the ſad heart which makes him tell;
" He ſpeaketh of that gentle one, I know,
" Since oft he Beatrice's name records;
" So, ladies dear, I underſtand him well."

This was the laſt of the poems which Dante compoſed in immediate honor and memory of Beatrice, and is the laſt of thoſe which he inſerted in the *Vita Nuova*. It was not that his love grew cold, or that her image became faint in his remembrance; but, as he tells us in a few concluding and memorable words, from this time forward he gave himſelf to preparation for a work in which the earthly Beatrice ſhould have leſs part, while the heavenly and

and bleſſed ſpirit of her whom he had loved ſhould receive more becoming honors. The lover's grief was to find no more expreſſion; the lamentations for his loſs were to ceaſe; the exhibition of a perſonal woe was at an end. Love and ſorrow, in their double miniſtry, had refined, enlarged, and exalted his ſpirit to the conception of a deſign unparalleled in its nature, and of which no intellectual genius, unpurged by ſuffering, and unpenetrated in its deepeſt receſſes by the ſpiritualizing heats of emotion, would have been capable of conceiving. Moreover, as time wore on, the natural effect of its paſſage was gradually to withdraw the poet from the influence of temporary exaltations of feeling, the reſult of recent experience of love and death, and to bring him to the contemplation of life, as affected by the preſence and the memory of Beatrice, in its eternal and univerſal relations. He tells us in the *Convito*, that, "after "ſome time, my mind, which neither ſuch conſolation as I "could give it, nor that offered to it by others, availed to "comfort, determined to turn to that method by which "others in grief had conſoled themſelves. And I ſet my-"ſelf to read that book, but little known, of Boëthius, in "which, in priſon and exile, he had conſoled himſelf. And "hearing, likewiſe, that Tully had written a book, in which, "treating of friendſhip, he had offered ſome words of com-"fort to Lælius, a moſt excellent man, on the death of "Scipio, his friend, I ſet myſelf to read it. And although "at firſt it was hard for me to enter into their meaning, I "at length entered into it ſo far as my knowledge of lan-guage,

" guage, and ſuch little capacity as I had, enabled me; by " means of which capacity, I had already, like one dreaming, " ſeen many things, as may be ſeen in the *New Life*. And " as it might happen that a man ſeeking ſilver ſhould, be- " yond his expectation, find gold, which a hidden chance " preſents to him, not, perhaps, without Divine direction, " ſo I, who ſought for conſolation, found not only a remedy " for my tears, but alſo acquaintance with authors, with " knowledge, and with books."

Nor did theſe ſerious and ſolitary ſtudies withdraw him from the purſuit of wiſdom among men and in the active world. Year by year, he entered more fully into the affairs of ſtate, and took a larger portion of their conduct upon himſelf.

His heart kept freſh by abiding recollections of love, his faith quickened by and intermingled with the tenderest hopes, his imagination uplifted by an affection which overleaped the boundaries of the inviſible world, and his intellect diſciplined by ſtudy of books and of men,—every part of his nature was prepared for the ſucceſsful accompliſhment of that great and ſacred deſign to which henceforth he devoted himſelf. Heaven had called and ſelected him for a work which even in his own eyes partook of the nature of a prophetic charge. His ſtrength was to be teſted and his capacity to be approved. Life was ordered for the fulfilment of his commiſſion. The men to whom God intruſts a meſſage for the world find the ſervice to which they are appointed one in which they muſt be ready to ſacrifice

ſacrifice everything. Dante looked forward, even at the beginning, to the end, and ſaw what lay between.

The pages of the *New Life* fitly cloſe with words of that life in which all things ſhall be made new, "and "there ſhall be no more death, neither ſorrow, nor crying, "neither ſhall there be any more pain; for the former "things are paſſed away." The little book ends thus:—

"Soon after this a wonderful viſion appeared to me, in "which I ſaw things which made me purpoſe to ſpeak no "more of this bleſſed one until I could more worthily treat "of her. And to attain to this, I ſtudy to the utmoſt of "my power, as ſhe truly knoweth. So that, if it ſhall "pleaſe Him through whom all things live, that my life be "prolonged for ſome years, I hope to ſpeak of her as never "was ſpoken of any woman. And then may it pleaſe Him "who is the Lord of Grace, that my ſoul may go to behold "the glory of its lady, the bleſſed Beatrice, who in glory "looks upon the face of Him, *qui eſt per omnia ſæcula bene-* "*dictus!*"

In 1321, the *Paradiſo* was finiſhed; in 1321, Dante died.

In the laſt canto of the *Paradiſo* are the following words:—

"Ed io ch' al fine di tutti i diſii
"M' appropinquava, ſi com' io doveva,
"L' ardor del deſiderio in me finii."

APPENDIX A. See page 7.

DATE OF THE COMPOSITION OF THE VITA NUOVA.

THE queſtion as to the period at which Dante completed the compoſition of the *Vita Nuova* is one not eaſily determined, and has given riſe to much controverſy among the critics who have diſcuſſed it. The difficulty in anſwering it ariſes partly from the conflict between certain ſtatements made in the book itſelf with others made concerning it by Dante in the *Convito*, and partly from ſome conſiderations of internal evidence.

Without entering on a diſcuſſion of the different opinions that have been held on this point, from that of the Canonico Biſcioni, who, regarding the work as a mere allegory, attributes it to Dante's twenty-fourth year,* to that of the myſtic Roſſetti, who declares his belief that it was not completed until after the year 1314, when Dante was forty-nine years old,† thus leaving a ſpace for controverſy of twenty-five

* *Prefazio alle Proſe di Dante*, p. xxv., quoted by Fraticelli, in his Introduction to the *Vita Nuova*, p. 247.

† See his curious, learned, and extravagant book, *Sullo Spirito Antipapale*, London, 1832, pp. 159, 160; and eſpecially his work entitled *La Beatrice di Dante*, London, 1842, pp. 69, 70.

twenty-five years,—I propoſe to examine the queſtion with ſuch light as Dante, the only abſolute authority upon it, affords us directly or indirectly.

Let us look firſt at the *Vita Nuova* itſelf. As regards more than one half of it,—that is, as regards all that portion which relates to the life of Beatrice, (for I regard as utterly untenable the notion that the Beatrice of the *New Life* is an allegoric figure,) there ſeems no reaſon to queſtion that the poems contained in it were written at the periods to which the poet aſſigns them, previous to her death in 1290. It is poſſible, however, that ſome of them may have received additions or other alterations at a later time. After Beatrice's death, we have the Sonnet, *Era venuta nella mente mia*, written to commemorate the firſt anniverſary of her departure from this world. This brings us to June, 1291. Then comes the account of the wandering of Dante's affections, the date of which is left undetermined in indefinite expreſſions. Theſe expreſſions are, however, of ſuch a kind as to imply no long duration of time. His firſt ſight of the gentle lady whoſe compaſſion moved him is ſaid to have been *poi per alquanto tempo*, "ſome little time after" the anniverſary of Beatrice's death. The feeling for this lady poſſeſſed him, as he ſays, *alquanti di*, "ſome few days." Then *after* this tribulation he tells us of the paſſage of pilgrims through the city, and *afterwards* of the requeſt made to him by two ladies for ſome of his rhymed words, in anſwer to which he wrote the laſt ſonnet of the volume. The cloſing paragraph of the *New Life* begins thus: "After this ſonnet a wonderful "viſion appeared to me, in which I ſaw things which made "me propoſe to ſpeak no more of this bleſſed one, until I "could more worthily treat of her."

Such

Such is the whole of the direct evidence afforded by the *Vita Nuova* itself as to the time of its compoſition. It is plainly the deſign of the poet to leave the impreſſion on the minds of his readers that the book in which he had recorded his love was completed within a ſhort time after the firſt anniverſary of the death of Beatrice. In poetic intention it is the work as well as the hiſtory of his youth. To the reader who reads in ſympathy with the poet, and who dwells rather on the eſſential meaning of his work than on the literal facts concerning it, the *Vita Nuova* will throughout belong to a period in Dante's life which cloſed not later than the year 1292.*

The firſt paſſage in the *Convito*, the work of later years, which refers to the *Vita Nuova*, correſponds with this view of its compoſition. In ſpeaking of the differences becoming theſe works of different periods of his life, Dante ſays, *Io in quella dinanzi, all' entrata di mia gioventute parlai, e in queſta dipoi quella già trapaſſata:* "In the former "[the *Vita Nuova*] I ſpoke at the beginning of my youth; "in the latter, youth having now paſſed." † And in another paſſage of the ſame work he tells us that youth begins with the twenty-fifth and ends with the forty-fifth year of life.‡ Thus a book written in the beginning of youth would belong to the years immediately following his twenty-fifth,—that is to 1291 or 1292.

In the Second Treatiſe of the *Convito*, in which Dante, now,

* Boccaccio, in his life of Dante, ſays, and we may accept the ſtatement of this his earlieſt biographer, "Egli primieramente, duranti "ancora le lagrime della ſua morta Beatrice, quaſi nel ſuo ventiſeeſimo "anno, compoſe un ſuo volumetto, il quale egli titolò *Vita Nuova*." p. 98.

† *Convito*, i. 1. ‡ *Id.* iv. 24.

now, it muſt be remembered, paſt middle life, gives an explanation of the literal and of the allegorical meaning of the Canzone, *Voi, che, intendendo, il terzo ciel movete*, and in which he tells us that the lady who for a time drew his heart away from Beatrice was no real perſonage, but was Philoſophy herſelf,—he ſays that the ſtar Venus had twice revolved in its orbit ſince the death of Beatrice, when for the firſt time this gentle lady appeared before him,—that is, about fifteen months had paſſed before his thoughts began to be faithleſs to the memory of Beatrice.* This ſtill correſponds with the indications given by the *Vita Nuova*; but in a later paſſage in the ſame Treatiſe, Dante ſays that a ſpace of perhaps thirty months elapſed from his firſt ſight of this lady, or, in other words, from his firſt ſtudy of Philoſophy, before ſhe took complete poſſeſſion of his ſoul.† Now, if the whole of this period be embraced in the narrative of the *New Life*, we muſt at once put off the completion of the *Vita Nuova* to a period certainly not leſs than four years after the death of Beatrice. But I give elſewhere my reaſons [See Appendix C.] for believing the interpretation in the *Convito* of this paſſage in Dante's life not to be literally exact,—to be, that is, an interpretation furniſhed by the imagination, rather than ſupported by reality,—and that its ſtatements in regard to time are to be accepted more as fixing a period for the courſe of religious and philoſophic ſtudy upon which Dante entered, than as eſtabliſhing a limit for the events of the *New Life*. If this be a juſt concluſion, there would as yet be no ground for aſſigning a later date to the main compoſition of the *Vita Nuova* than the year 1292.

We

* *Convito*, ii. 2. † *Id.* ii. 13.

We have now gone over the whole of the direct evidence which Dante has left upon this subject, and it seems to me, on the whole, to coincide with the poetic probability. But another question arises,—even supposing that the composition of the *Vita Nuova* was virtually complete in 1292, is it not possible, and do not some passages render it probable, that additions to its substance and alterations of its form were made after that period? Upon this point the only evidence is indirect, but it is of such a kind as to lead toward the conclusion that some additions may have been made to the book a considerable time after its first putting together.

The last sonnet but one of the *Vita Nuova* is that addressed to the pilgrims who were on their way to Rome "to see the blessed image which Jesus Christ left to us as "the likeness of his most beautiful countenance." Now, in the year of Jubilee, 1300, this image, the Veronica, was the chief object of worship which drew pilgrims to Rome. Giovanni Villani, who himself made this pilgrimage, says: "For the consolation of Christian pilgrims, the Veronica of "the *sudario* of Christ was shown in St. Peter's every "Friday, and solemn feast-day. For the sake of which a "great part of the Christians who were then living, made "this pilgrimage, as well women as men, from distant and "various lands, from far and near." *

It is not, indeed, a necessary conclusion from the fact that pilgrims were led to go to Rome to see the Veronica in the year 1300, that Dante's Sonnet refers to that year.† The

* *Cronica*, viii. 36.

† Wegele, in his *Life of Dante*, seems to go too far in asserting that this Sonnet and its commentary can be referred only to the period of the Jubilee. See his *Dante's Leben und Werke*, Jena, 1852, p. 105.

The Veronica was, there ſeems little doubt, diſplayed on certain high feſtivals in other years than thoſe of Jubilee; but it would certainly be more probable that Dante ſhould have compoſed this Sonnet in that year, as he tells us that it was written at the time "when *many people were going* "to ſee the likeneſs of our Lord."

Again, the concluding words of the little book, as they now ſtand, have an obvious and direct reference to the viſion of the *Divina Commedia*, and to Dante's intention of writing his great poem. The words imply that the intention was already taking form, and there is no reaſon for ſuppoſing that this work, to which he conſecrated his later life, was undertaken before the year 1300, to which it profeſſedly belongs, and in which he experienced the viſion which it reports. The ſcope of the *Divina Commedia* is ſuch as could only have been conceived by a maturely experienced man, and the execution is ſo coherent that it is hardly poſſible to doubt that the deſign must have been complete from the beginning.

It ſeems to me, then, not unlikely that the *Vita Nuova* as originally compoſed, ended with the twenty-third Sonnet, *Laſſo! per forza de molti ſoſpiri*, a Sonnet compoſed, as the poet tells us, after Beatrice had appeared to him in a viſion, "con quelle veſtimenta ſanguigne colle quali ap- "parve prima agli occhi miei: e pareami giovane in ſimile "etade a quella, in che prima la vidi." And he wrote it in order that no one might have any doubt that the vain temptation, which had led him away from Beatrice for a time, was utterly deſtroyed. The book, if this Sonnet were the laſt that belonged to it would have ended with the words, touchingly appropriate —

" Quel dolce nome di Madonna ſcritto,
" E della morte ſua molte parole."

An argument for this view is to be found alſo in the character of the viſion in which Beatrice ſhowed herſelf to him ſuch as ſhe was when he firſt beheld her. The end thus united itſelf with the beginning of the ſtory of his life made new by love.

If the *Vita Nuova* originally ended here, there is nothing ſtrange in the fact that Dante a few years later ſhould have added a few pages to it, after the conception of the *Divina Commedia* had taken form in his imagination, in order to connect the work of his youth more directly, and in indiſſoluble relation, with the work of his maturer years. The *Vita Nuova* was in fact the real introduction to the *Divina Commedia*. The Beatrice of the one was the forerunner of the Beatrice of the other. In his love for the living Beatrice he had already foretaſted the joys of the eternal world. Her beauty, her grace, her goodneſs, her gentleneſs had even upon earth ſeemed to him divinely excellent, types of divine realities. His imagination had beheld a miracle in her. And ſo when he exalts her in the *Divina Commedia*, her who had been a ſimple Florentine maiden and wife, — when by virtue of his perſonal faith he ſets her in glory above the Saints, near to the Moſt Holy Virgin herſelf, and repreſents her as the favored one of the Almighty, — he is but carrying out the fervent conceptions of his *New Life* to their required and true concluſions. In this was Dante's poetic power fully diſplayed, and in this was the depth, the purity, and conſiſtency of his nature revealed, that without incongruity, without any jar of the moſt delicate harmonies of feeling, he could transform his earthly to a heavenly Love, and make the

ſtory

ſtory of his youth the only fit introduction to a poem "whoſe ſubject was man," and whoſe ſcene was laid in the terrors and the glories of the eternal world.

The portion which I ſuppoſe may have been added in 1300 to the *Vita Nuova* as it originally ſtood, contains in addition to the Sonnet addreſſed to the Pilgrims one other Sonnet, in which there is nothing that would enable us to fix its date with confidence, but which is of ſuch character that it may without improbability, nay rather with ſome likelihood, be aſſigned to the later period. It is the laſt Sonnet in the volume, and as may be ſeen in the tranſlation that I have given of it, Dante tells in it of the journey of his ſigh drawn upward by a new Intelligence to the higheſt realm of Heaven, where it beholds his lady in honor. But the pilgrim ſpirit beholds her ſuch that he brings back an account of her which Dante is not fully able to comprehend. But, after the viſion which the poet records in the immediately following paſſage, he ſays, that it is his ſtudy and his hope to ſpeak of her hereafter as was never ſpoken of any woman. And thus this laſt Sonnet ſeems to give expreſſion to the natural doubts and dimneſs of anticipatory conceptions which attended the ſetting forth upon the *Divina Commedia*.

It is, furthermore, to be noted as a peculiarity of this Sonnet, and as an indication of its compoſition at a later period than thoſe which precede it, that whereas the viſions which they report have reference, without exception, to things which he had experienced, or ſeen, or fancied, when awake, thus appearing to be dependent on previous waking excitements, the viſion related in this Sonnet ſeems, on the contrary, to have had its origin in no external circumſtance, but to be the reſult of a purely internal condition of feeling.

It

It was a *new* Intelligence that led his ſigh upwards;—a new Intelligence which prepared him for his viſion at Eaſter in 1300.

There is in the firſt Canzone of the *Vita Nuova* a paſſage which has been interpreted as a hint of the *Divina Commedia*, and, if it be ſo, we muſt either ſuppoſe it to have been added at the later period, or to imply that the conception of the great poem was already formed in Dante's earlier years. Neither of theſe ſuppoſitions appears to me probable. The paſſage is contained in the ſecond ſtanza of the Canzone, and is as follows:—

> " Diletti miei, or ſofferite in pace
> " Che voſtra ſpeme ſia quanto mi piace
> " Là ov' è alcun che perder lei ſ'attende,
> " *E che dirà nell' Inferno a' malnati:*
> " ' *Io vidi la ſperanza de' beati.*' "

If Dante had not written the *Divina Commedia* theſe words would awaken no ſuſpicion of a double meaning, and the ſimple interpretation, of which they are ſuſceptible, would then appear the only one. They would be taken to mean that the youthful poet, in the exaltation of his paſſion and the exaggeration of his humility, feeling the infinite diſtance between the pure perfection of his beloved, and his own human ſinfulneſs, and acknowledging the ſeparation that ſuch difference would create between himſelf and her in the future life, while he ſet her in the higheſt Heaven doomed himſelf by compariſon to Hell, foreſeeing at the ſame time that even in Hell he ſhould retain the joy of re-remembering that " he had beheld the hope of thoſe in bliſs."

The theory that has juſt been preſented, of the concluſion

cluſion of the *Vita Nuova*, and the interpretation that I have ſuggeſted for the paſſages bearing on the *Divina Commedia*, are not free from difficulties, but the main point to regard is whether greater difficulties do not attend any other view which may be taken of the ſubject. Difficulties and doubts will always belong to the interpretation of Dante's works. He was a myſtic, both by nature and by taſte. Intentionally, or without fixed deſign, he has enveloped all his writings in a veil of myſtery. In ſome places the veil has been or may be lifted, but over great portions of his poetry it remains impenetrable. We can ſee the outward form, but the inner ſpirit eludes the gaze. Thus it is, perhaps, with the *New Life*, but whether there be ſecrets hidden under its open words or not, we may well reſt content to receive ſo much as it freely gives, and to leave its obſcure double-meanings, if ſuch there be, to baffle the ingenuity of pedants, and to excite the dreams of enthuſiaſts.

APPENDIX B. See page 43.

STRUCTURE OF THE VITA NUOVA.

IT is to be obſerved, upon cloſe examination, that the poems of the *Vita Nuova* are arranged in ſuch order as to ſuggeſt an intention on the part of Dante to give to his work a ſymmetrical ſtructure. If the arrangement be accidental, or governed ſimply by the relation of the poems to the ſequence of the events deſcribed in the narrative that connects them, it is certainly curious that they ſhould have happened to fall into ſuch order as to give to the little book a regularity of conſtruction.

The ſucceſſion of the thirty-one poems of the *New Life* is as follows: —

5 Sonnets,
1 Ballad,
4 Sonnets,
1 Canzone,
4 Sonnets,
1 Canzone,
3 Sonnets,
1 imperfect Canzone,
1 Canzone,
1 Sonnet,
1 imperfect Canzone,
8 Sonnets.

At

At firſt ſight no regularity appears in their order, but a little analyſis reveals it. The moſt important poems, not only from their form and length, but alſo from their ſubſtance, are the three Canzoni. Now it will be obſerved that the firſt Canzone is preceded by ten and followed by four minor poems. The ſecond Canzone, which is by far the moſt elaborate poem of the whole, ſtands alone, holding the central place in the volume. The third Canzone is preceded by four and followed by ten minor poems. Thus the order appears as follows: —

10 minor poems,
1 Canzone,
4 minor poems,
1 Canzone,
4 minor poems,
1 Canzone,
10 minor poems.

Here, leaving the central Canzone to ſtand by itſelf, we have three ſeries of ten poems each. It will be obſerved further that the firſt and the third Canzone ſtand at the ſame diſtance from the central poem, and that ten minor poems ſeparate the one from the beginning, the other from the end of the volume, and that in each inſtance nine of theſe poems are Sonnets. It is alſo worth remark that while the firſt Canzone is followed by four Sonnets, and the third is preceded by three Sonnets and an imperfect Canzone, this imperfect Canzone is a ſingle ſtanza which has the ſame number of lines, and the ſame arrangement of its lines in reſpect to rhyme, as a Sonnet, differing in this reſpect from the other Canzoni. It may be fairly claſſed as a Sonnet, its only difference from one being in the name that Dante has given to it.

The

The ſymmetrical conſtruction now appears ſtill more clearly —

10 minor poems, all but one of them Sonnets,
1 Canzone,
4 Sonnets,
1 Canzone,
4 Sonnets,
1 Canzone,
10 minor poems, all but one of them Sonnets.

It may be taken as evidence that this regularity of arrangement was intentional, that a compariſon of the firſt with the third Canzone ſhows them to be mutually related, one being the balance of the other. The firſt begins : —

" Donne ch' avete intelletto d' amore
" Io vo' con voi della mia donna dire."

and the laſt line of its firſt ſtanza is

" Chè non è coſa da parlarne altrui."

In the firſt ſtanza of the third there is a diſtinct reference to theſe words : —

" E perchè mi ricorda ch' io parlai
" Della mia donna, mentre che vivia,
" Donne gentili, volentier con vui
" Non vo' parlarne altrui
" Se non a cor gentil che 'n donna ſia."

The ſecond ſtanza of the firſt Canzone relates to the deſire which is felt in Heaven for Beatrice. The correſponding ſtanza of the third declares that it was this deſire for her which

which led to her being taken from the world. The third ſtanza of the one relates to the operation of her virtues and beauties upon earth, of the other to the remembrance of them. There is a ſimilarity of expreſſion to be traced throughout.

In the laſt ſtanza, technically called the *commiato* or diſmiſſal, in which the poem is perſonified and ſent on its way, in the firſt Canzone it is called, *figliuola d' amor*, in the third, *figliuola di triſtizia*. One was the child of love, the other of ſorrow; one was the poem recording Beatrice's life, the other her death. It is thus that one is made to ſerve as the complement and balance of the other, in the ſtructure of the *New Life*.

It may be poſſible to trace a ſimilar relation between ſome of the minor poems of the beginning and the end of the volume; but I have not obſerved it, if it exiſts.

The ſecond, the central Canzone is, as I have ſaid, the moſt important poem in the volume, from the force of imagination diſplayed in it, from its ſerving to connect the life of Beatrice with her death, and thus it is, as of right, placed in the poſition which it holds in reference to to the poems which precede and follow it.

If a reaſon that might lead Dante thus ſymmetrically to arrange the poems of this little book in a triple ſeries of ten, be inquired for, it may perhaps be found in the value which he ſet upon ten as the perfect number, while in the three times repeated ſeries, arranged to culminate in a ſingle central poem, he may perhaps have found ſome fanciful analogy to that three and one which he dwells on in the paſſage in which he treats of the friendlineſs of the number nine to Beatrice. At any rate, as he there ſays, this

"this is the reaſon which I ſee for it, and which pleaſes "me the moſt; though perhaps a more ſubtile perſon might "diſcover a more ſubtile reaſon."

APPENDIX

APPENDIX C. See page 66.

INCONSISTENCY OF STATEMENTS IN THE CONVITO WITH THOSE OF THE VITA NUOVA.

IN the firſt chapter of the firſt Treatiſe of the *Convito*, Dante ſays, "E ſe nella preſente opera, la quale è *Convito* nominata, e vo' che ſia, piu virilmente ſi trattaſſe che nella *Vita Nuova*, non intendo però a quella in parte alcuna derogare, ma maggiormente giovare per queſta quella." But notwithſtanding this declaration, in the ſecond Treatiſe of the *Convito*, we find ſtatements in literal contradiction to ſome portions of the earlier work, and which, however they may be explained, cannot be interpreted ſo as to render the narratives in the two works conſiſtent with each other. It becomes then a queſtion of ſome intereſt, how theſe differences are to be accounted for, and reconciled.

In the account which the poet gives, near the end of the *Vita Nuova*, of his having been for ſome few days faithleſs to the memory of Beatrice, through excitement of feeling toward a gentle lady who looked at him compaſſionately, and awakened thoughts of love within him, there is not a ſingle expreſſion which could ſuggeſt that the narrative was to be taken in any other way than as a ſtatement of actual facts. It bears on its face the marks of truth, and records an experience which a heart at once ſo ſuſceptible and ſo faithful as Dante's was peculiarly liable to paſs through. But

But in the *Convito* (ii. 13) he tells us that the whole of this paſſage in the *Vita Nuova* is to be regarded as an allegory, and that the gentle lady of whom he was enamored was no other than Philoſophy, and the ſecond Treatiſe of the *Convito* cloſes with the words, "E così dico e affermo che "la donna di cui io innamorai, appreſſo lo primo amore, fu "la belliſſima e oneſtiſſima figlia dello Imperadore dell' "Univerſo, alla quale Pittagora poſe nome Filoſofia."

But even if we accept this declaration, and regard the narrative in the *Vita Nuova* as allegorical, difficulties ſtill remain. In the *New Life* the ſtruggle between the old love and the new is repreſented as terminating in favor of the former. In the *Convito* the contrary is the caſe.* In the *Vita Nuova* the new love is repreſented as a vile and unworthy weakneſs. He ſays, "le miei occhi ſi cominciaro "a dilettare troppo di vederla, onde molte volte me ne "crucciava e avevamene per vile aſſai." And again, "Deh "che penſiero è queſto che in coſi vile modo mi vuol con- "ſolare." And ſtill again, "Diſſi queſto Sonetto, il quale "comincia *Gentil* penſiero ; e diſſi *gentile* in quanto ragion- "ava a gentil donna, *che per altro era viliſſimo.*" But in the *Convito* he ſpeaks in a very different way. For inſtance he ſays (ii. 2), "dirizzai la voce mia in quella parte, onde "procedeva la vittoria del nuovo penſiero *che era virtuoſiſſi-* "*mo* come virtù celeſtiale." And again (ii. 13), "ed io "ſentendomi levare dal penſiero del primo amore alla virtù "di queſto." Moreover, as I have previouſly mentioned in ſpeaking of the date of the compoſition of the *Vita Nuova*, the ſpace of time apparently aſſigned in it to the period

* See the Canzone to the expoſition of which the Second Treatiſe is devoted, and alſo chapters 2, 11, 13, 16.

period of faithleſſneſs to Beatrice, is widely different from that aſſigned in the *Convito* to the eſtabliſhment of Philoſophy as miſtreſs of the affections of Dante.

Theſe contradictions exiſting between the two books appear to be irreconcilable, even if we accept Dante's aſſertion that the gentle lady of the *Vita Nuova* was ſimply the figure that he gave to Philoſophy. But I do not feel inclined to accept this aſſertion. It ſeems to me that the moſt probable explanation of the diverſity in the two repreſentations is to be found in the following view.

Let us aſſume that the narrative in the *Vita Nuova* is to be taken literally, and was written but a ſhort time after the occurrence of the events which it records. The events connected with the lady who for a time diſputed Beatrice's ſovereignty over Dante's heart, paſſed, leaving but ſlight trace either on his memory or on his life. Their principal reſult had been to add ſome pages to the book of his love. The peaceful and entire rule of Beatrice in his affections ſeemed, as time went on, never to have been really diſturbed by the intruſion of any other paſſion. In maturer years as he looked back at the period of his ſorrow he ſaw only how, under the healing miniſtrations of Philoſophy, in which he included the teachings of religion, the bitterneſs and anguiſh of grief for her loſs had been ſucceeded by a calm ſtrength, and ſelf-poſſeſſion, in which the memories and the hopes connected with Beatrice had taken a place in his ſpiritual life correſponding to that which her actual preſence had filled in his mortal exiſtence. And when, at a late period, he came to the compoſition of the *Convito*, and found in the book of his youth this account of the power which another feeling had for a time exerted over him, unmindful of the fact that it had been a real feeling, and led

led by the allegorizing tendencies of his intellect, he treated it as ſimply a type of his firſt entrance into the courſe of ſtudy, into the acquaintance with Philoſophy, which, while conſoling him for Beatrice's loſs, had alſo fitted him by ſlow degrees for that companionſhip with her through the ſpheres of Heaven which in imagination he poſſeſſed, and of which he was about to reveal the ſupernal glories and delights in his *Paradiſo*. And he was the rather induced to give this formal, (this ideally true though literally falſe,) interpretation to that paſſage of his *New Life*, in order to ſecure himſelf againſt the miſinterpretations of low ſouls, who would find in the account of the lady who had for a time made him think of other love than that for Beatrice a proof of fickleneſs, and a ground for charging him with exaggeration in aſſigning to his firſt, his conſtant, his only real love, a ſtation ſo exalted. In the firſt chapter of the Third Treatiſe of the *Convito* he himſelf ſays: "Dico che penſai che da molti diretro da me "forſe ſarei ſtato ripreſo di levezza d' animo, udendo me "eſſere dal primo amore mutato. Per che, a torre via "queſta riprenſione, nullo migliore argomento era, che dire "qual era quella donna che m' avea mutato: che per la "ſua eccellenzia manifeſta aver ſi può conſiderazione della "ſua virtù; e per lo 'ntendimento della ſua grandiſſima "virtù ſi può penſare ogni ſtabilità d' animo eſſere a quella "mutabile, e però me non giudicare lieve, e non iſtabile."

Thus the contradictions of the two books may perhaps be accounted for. But whether they be ſo or not, we ſee that in exalting Philoſophy Dante was alſo exalting Beatrice who had become to him the type of the higheſt Philoſophy. And thus the form and tone of thoſe myſtical Canzoni is to be explained, in which the poet hides under the expreſſions

of

of love the praiſe of this Philoſophy who was the miſtreſs of his ſoul. To Beatrice withdrawn from earth Dante wrote no love-poems, but he took delight in writing ſubtile Canzoni, in the manner and with the expreſſions of love-poems, in honor of that Philoſophy through which he was entering more and more into the depths of the Wiſdom in which Beatrice had become perfect.

APPENDIX D. See page 40.

TRANSLATION OF GUIDO CAVALCANTI'S CANZONE, *DONNA MI PRIEGA.*

THE moſt famous of all the anſwers given by the early Italian poets to the queſtion, What is Love? is that of Guido Cavalcanti. It is as difficult as it is famous. Its meaning has been the ſubject of long diſcuſſions, and, in ſpite of the learned commentaries of the Cardinal Egidio Colonna, *il principe de' Teologi*, of Paolo del Roſſo, of Marſilio Ficino, and of other leſs noted critics, it is ſtill a matter of doubt whether the poet intended to treat in it of natural or Platonic love.

The Canzone is, in fact, a metaphyſical diſquiſition, — and is fuller of the ſubtilties of ſcholaſtic philoſophy than of poetic expreſſion or feeling. The opinion of Lorenzo de' Medici ſhows in what eſteem it has been held. He ſays of it: "Ma ſopra tutte le altre ſue Opere è mirabiliſ- "ſima una Canzone, nella quale ſottilmente queſto grazioſo "poeta d' amore ogni qualità, virtù, accidente deſcriſſe."

For us it has little intrinſic worth; but it is of intereſt, as the moſt famous poem of Dante's neareſt friend, — as ſhowing the metaphyſical tendencies of the poets of that age, tendencies to which Dante himſelf ſometimes yielded, — and ſtill more as exhibiting how truly Dante was the chief author of the *dolce nuovo ſtile*, and how wide a diſtance lay between

between his love-poems and thoſe of him whom Benvenuto da Imola calls *alter oculus Florentiæ tempore Dantis.*

The following tranſlation was made at my requeſt by the Reverend Charles T. Brooks, by whoſe kindneſs and ſkill my volume has greatly profited. He has ſucceeded in accompliſhing the difficult taſk of rendering the meaning while preſerving the involved rhyme of the original. Even the *rimalmezzo* has been ſecured without ſacrificing ſenſe to ſound. This Canzone is ſaid to have been written in reply to a Sonnet by Guido Orlandi, in the name of a lady, beginning, *Onde ſi muove e donde naſce Amore?*

" A lady prays: wherefore I here will tell
" Of an event can ſo torment and tear
" The heart with care, that men have called it Love,
" That who gainſays may feel the truth full well.
" What I preſent the intelligent can bear,
" But I deſpair that he who not above
" All baſeneſs lives ſhould reach diſcourſe ſo high;
" For I, unhelped by ſcience, have not ſkill,
" Nor yet the will, at large to demonſtrate
" Where Love reſides, and who doth it create;
" And what its eſſence is and potency;
" And why and whence each motion volatile;
" The pleaſing thrill from which Love's name doth date;
" And whether man its form can deſignate.
" In that ſame part where Memory hath her ſeat,
" Love holds his ſtate, — doth emanate (as light
" Produceth bright) from an obſcurity
" Bred in the heart by Mars, and keeps his heat.
" Love, ſo create, hath name ſenſate, by right, —
" Heart's appetite; ſoul's habit; ſecretly
" Born of a viſible form for which it pines,
" Whoſe lines of beauty in the pliant mind
" Fit ſubject find, fair lodging-place and ſtay.
" But in that part can none its weight aſſay;

For

" For not toward earth its quality inclines.
" It ſhines perennial deſire; the mind
" Diſcerns its kind; not palpable its ſway;
" Hence of itſelf no ſemblance can convey.
" Virtue 'tis not, but out of that proceeds
" Which in man's view perfection ſeems to be.
" A quality that's ſenſual I intend:
" From healthy thought the judgment wide it leads;
" Takes paſſion's gleam for reaſon's beam;—ah me!
" Ill diſcerns he who makes of vice a friend.
" Its power a deadly courſe full oft doth take,
" If check be to that virtue ſtiffly made
" Which lends its aid in the oppoſing way.
" Not that it harms the natural life, I ſay;
" But if from perfect good its will ſhall break,
" So far man's proper life has then decayed;
" No more, ſelf-ſtayed, holds reaſon kingly ſway;
" Valor, forgotten, dies in man that day.
" Love's eſſence is, when the ſtrong paſſion keeps
" Such tumult here that nature's ſphere it ſpurns,
" Reſtleſs it yearns; repoſe forſakes the mind;
" With quick caprice ſhifts color, ſmiles, and weeps,
" And looks of cheer to haggard fear it turns;
" Not long ſojourns; yet wilt thou ſurely find
" In noble ſouls it oftenest doth dwell.
" The ſwell of the new tranſport moveth ſighs,
" And man deſcries henceforth no place of reſt;
" A frenzy ſtirs within that fires his breaſt,
" Whereof experience alone can tell;
" To tempt its ſpell I would no man adviſe,
" Nor in no wiſe to ſeek here pleaſant jeſt,
" Ne wiſdom, great or ſmall,—a hope unbleſt!
" Likeneſs of mind a mutual look imparts
" Which makes appear the pleaſure clear and ſure;
" No more obſcure, once lit, the flame remains:
" But if not kind, then beauties are not darts;
" For looks auſtere repel with fear, not lure.
" Deſert ſecure the heart that's pierced attains.

" Love is not apprehenſible to ſight,
" Pure white upon the object falls its beam ;
" And well I deem, form is not ſeen indeed, —
" Much leſs, then, that which from it doth proceed ;
" Devoid of color, immaterial ſprite,
" Its light through obſcure medium ſends its gleam :
" No fraud nor dream of faithleſs man ye read,
" That only from itſelf doth come love's meed.
" Canzone, thou canſt now ſecurely go
" Whither thou wilt ; for to thy comely phraſe
" Shall come high praiſe, and to thy thought, alſo,
" From them that know to taſte ſuch rare repaſt :
" To ſtay with others thou no talent haſt."

NOTES

NOTES.

[1] *Vita di Dante.* Milano, 1823, pp. 29, 30.

[2] *Vita di Dante*, p. 69.

[3] For *vita nova* in the ſenſe of *early life*, ſee *Purgatory*, xxx. 115, with the comments of Benvenuto da Imola and Landino; and for *età novella* in a ſimilar ſenſe, ſee Canzone xxviii. ſt. 6. Fraticelli, who ſupports this interpretation, gives theſe with other examples, but none more to the point. Mr. Joſeph Garrow, who made a tranſlation into Engliſh of the *Vita Nuova*, which was printed at Florence in 1846, entitles his book "The Early Life of Dante Alighieri." But, as giving probability to the meaning to which I incline, ſee Canzone x. ſt. 5.

"Lo giorno che coſtei nel mondo venne,
"Secondo che ſi trova
"Nel libro della mente che vien meno,
"La mia perſona parvola ſoſtenne
"Una paſſion nova."

That day when ſhe unto the world attained,
As is found written true
Within the book of my now ſinking ſoul,
Then by my childiſh nature was ſuſtained
A paſſion new.

In referring to Dante's Minor Poems, I ſhall refer to them as they ſtand in the firſt volume of Fraticelli's edition of the *Opere Minore di Dante*, Firenze, 1834. There is great need of a careful, critical edition of the *Canzoniere* of Dante, in which poems falſely aſcribed to him ſhall no longer hold place among the genuine. But there is little hope of this from Italy; for the race of Italian commentators on Dante is, as a whole, more frivolous, more impertinent, and duller than that of Engliſh commentators on Shakeſpeare.

[4] Compare

[4] Compare Cacciaguida's account (*Paradiſo*, xv. 97–135) of the ſimplicity of manners in Florence in the twelfth century, as contraſted with the corruption in Dante's time.

" Non v' era giunto ancor Sardanapalo
" A moſtrar ciò che in camera ſi puote."

[5] The word in the original (Villani, Book vii. c. 89) is *giocolari*, the Italian form of the French *jongleur*,—the appellation of thoſe whoſe profeſſion was to ſing or recite the verſes of the troubadours or the romances of chivalry, and who often joined to this occupation the practice of tricks of jugglery, and of other arts of amuſement. See an extract from a poem of Girard de Calançon, deſcribing the qualifications of a good *jongleur*, in *Dante Alighieri, ou la Poeſie Amoureuſe*, par E. J. Delécluze, Tome I. p. 77.

[6] See Boccaccio, *Decamerone*, Giorn. vi. Nov. 9, for an entertaining picture of Florentine feſtivities.

[7] The Or' San Michele and the original church of Santo Spirito were erected alſo during this period. And the feeling which moved Florence thus to build herſelf into beauty was one ſhared by the other Italian republican cities at this time. Venice, Verona, Piſa, Siena, Orvieto, were building or adding to churches and palaces ſuch as have never ſince been ſurpaſſed.

[8] Cicognara, *Storia della Scultura*, II. 147.

[9] Guido Guinicelli will always be leſs known by his own verſes than by Dante's calling him

" il padre
" Mio e degli altri miei miglior che mai
" Rime d' amore uſar dolci e leggiadre."

" father
" Of me and all thoſe better others
" Who ſweet chivalric lovelays formed."
Purgatory, xxvi. 97–99.

And Guido Cavalcanti, " he who took from this other Guido the praiſe of ſpeech,"

" Così ha tolto l' uno all' altro Guido
" La gloria della lingua,"— *Purgatory*, xi. 97, 98,

is more famous as Dante's friend than as a poet.

[10] *Decamerone*,

[10] *Decamerone*, Giorn. vi. Nov. 9. *Logician* is here to be underſtood in an extended ſenſe, as the ſtudent of letters, or *arts*, as they were then called, in general.

[11] It may be that Dante here refers to the meaning of the name Beatrice, —*She who renders happy*, *She who bleſſes*.

[12] According to the aſtronomy of the times, the ſphere of the ſtars moved from weſt to eaſt one degree in a hundred years. The twelfth of a degree was, therefore, eight and a half years. See the *Convito*, Tratt. ii. c. vi.

[13] Compare with this paſſage Canzone x. ſt. 5, 6, — eſpecially the lines,

" E, ſe 'l libro non erra,
" Lo ſpirito maggior tremò ſi forte,
" Che parve ben, che morte
" Per lui in queſto mondo giunta foſſe."

" And, if the book errs not, the chief ſpirit ſo greatly trembled, that it " plainly appeared that death for him had arrived in this world."

When Dante meets Beatrice in Purgatory, he ſays, referring to this time, — and it is pleaſant to note theſe connections between his earlieſt and his lateſt works, —

" Toſto che nella viſta mi percoſſe
" L' alta virtù, che già m' avea trafitto
" Prima ch' io fuor di puerizia foſſe."

Canto xxx. l. 40–42.

[14] The text of the *Vita Nuova* is often uncertain. Here, for example, many authorities concur in the reading, " *la quale fu ſi toſto a lui diſ-* " *ponſata*," " which had been ſo quickly betrothed to him." But I prefer to read " *diſpoſta*," as being more in accordance with the remainder of the figure concerning Love. The text uſually followed in theſe verſions is that of Fraticelli.

[15] This ſonnet is one of the claſs called *ſonetti rinterzati*, containing six lines more than a common ſonnet. The formal comment which follows it may ſerve as an example of the commentary with which Dante illuſtrated all the poems of the *Vita Nuova*.

[16] In his few words of introduction to the *Vita Nuova*, Dante implies that he ſhall not copy out into his book all his compoſitions relating

to

to its ſubject. Some of the poems of this period, not included in the *Vita Nuova*, have been preſerved. Compare with this paſſage Sonnet lxxix.,—

"Se 'l bello aſpetto non mi foſſe tolto,"—

which was apparently written during Dante's abſence from Beatrice.

17 Compare Canzoni x. and xi.

18 This is, perhaps, the earlieſt reference in modern literature to the uſe of painting as a decoration. It is probable that it was a recent application of the art, which had, in the earlier period of the revival, been almoſt confined to churches or religious eſtabliſhments. We ſhall have occaſion again to note a reference to painting.

It affords an amuſing illuſtration of the miſcomprehenſion of Dante by the commentators, to find one ſo intelligent as Mr. Cayley ſaying that he fancies that Dante, in this and other paſſages in which he ſpeaks of trembling when in preſence of his lady, "deſcribes ſome conſtitutional "paroxyſms to which he was liable under the influence of agitation"! Note on *Purgatory*, xxx. 39.

19 To this period, apparently, belong Sonnets xxix. and xxx. of the general collection. The laſt may not unlikely have been omitted in the *Vita Nuova* becauſe the death of Beatrice had inveſted every memory of her with ſuch tenderneſs as to make the expreſſions of this poem ſeem harſh to her lover's heart:—

"I curſe the day on which I firſt beheld
"The light of thy betraying eyes."

20 It will be obſerved that the words "ſpeak" and "ſpeech" are uſed in reference to poetic compoſitions. In thoſe days the poet was commonly called *il dicitore in rima*, "the ſpeaker in rhyme."

21 The epithet which Dante conſtantly applies to Beatrice is *gentiliſſima*, "moſt gentle," while other ladies are called *gentile*, "gentle." Here he makes the diſtinction between the *donna* and the *donna gentile*. The term is uſed with a ſignification ſimilar to that which it has in our own early literature, and fuller than that which it now retains. It refers both to race, as in the phraſe "of gentle birth," and to the qualities of character. "Gentleneſs means the ſame as nobleneſs," ſays Dante, in the *Convito*; "and by nobleneſs is meant the perfection of its own "nature in anything." Tratt. iv. c. 14–16.

The

The delicacy and the dignity of meaning attaching to the word render it an epithet eſpecially appropriate to Beatrice, as implying all that is lovelieſt in perſon and character. Its uſe in the *Vita Nuova* is the more to be remarked, as in the *Divina Commedia* it is never applied to Beatrice. Its appropriateneſs ceaſed with her earthly life, for there was "another glory of the celeſtial body."

22 This Canzone is one of the moſt beautiful of Dante's minor poems. I have preferred to give it in a literal tranſlation, rather than to attempt one in which the involved rhyme of the original ſhould be preſerved, fearing leſt this could not be done by me without too great ſacrifice of the meaning to the form. The original muſt be read by thoſe who deſire to appreciate its grace of expreſſion and its depth of feeling. Dante himſelf prized this Canzone, and repreſents Buonagiunta da Lucca in Purgatory as addreſſing him,—

"Ma dì ſ' io veggio qui colui che fuore
"Traſſe le nuove rime, cominciando:
"*Donne, ch' avete intelletto d' Amore.*"

"But tell me if I ſee him who wrote the new rhymes, beginning, "'Ladies who have intelligence of Love.'" *Purgatory*, xxiv. 49–51.

23 For remarks on the bearing of this paſſage, ſee Appendix A — *Date of the Compoſition of the Vita Nuova.*

24 It is probable that Dante refers to the firſt line of a Canzone by Guido Guinicelli,—

"Al cor gentil ripara ſempre Amore,"—

a verſe which he may have had ſtill in his memory when he makes Franceſca da Rimini ſay, (*Inferno*, v. 100,)

"Amor, ch' al cor gentil ratto ſ' apprende";

though this was, perhaps, rather ſuggeſted by the firſt verſe of a ſonnet by the ſame Guido,—

"Fuoco d' Amore in gentil cor ſ' apprende."

For other definitions of Love, as underſtood by the Italian poets of the trecento, ſee Guido Cavalcanti's moſt famous and moſt obſcure Canzone, *Donna mi priega* (ſee Appendix D.— *Tranſlation of Guido Cavalcanti's Canzone, Donna mi priega*); the ſonnet (No. xlii.) falſely aſcribed to Dante, *Molti volendo dir che foſſe Amore;* the ſonnet by Jacopo da Lentino, *Amore è un deſio che vien dal core;* and many others.

 25 Compare

25 Compare with this paſſage Sonnet xlvi., which ſeems to have been written on this occaſion :—

" Voi, donne, che pietoſo atto moſtrate,"

and Sonnet xlvii.,—

" Onde venite voi, così penſoſe ?"

26 In the *Divina Commedia* frequent reference is made to the ſinging of Oſanna. See *Purgatorio*, xi. 11 ; xxix. 51 ; *Paradiso*, vii. 1 ; xxviii. 94, 118 ; xxxii. 135 ; and eſpecially viii. 28.

27 See the charming Sonnet lii. :—

" Guido vorrei che tu, e Lappo, ed io."

28 " The tongue of the *oco* " is the Provençal tongue, the term being ſtill preſerved in the name of the province *Languedoc*. " The tongue of the *ſì* " is the language of Italy, " il paeſe là dove il *ſì* suona." *Inferno*, xxxiii. 80.

29 Perhaps the ſpirit of the latter part of this ſonnet may be better conveyed by rendering thus :—

" So pleaſeth ſhe all thoſe approaching nigh her,
" She gives the heart a ſweetneſs through the eyes
" Which none can underſtand who doth not prove.
" And from her lip there ſeems indeed to move
" A ſpirit ſweet, and in Love's very guiſe,
" Which goeth ſaying to the ſoul, ' Aſpire ! ' "

Compare the very beautiful Ballata vi., and Sonnet xlviii. beginning,

" Di donne io vidi una gentile ſchiera."

30 See Lionardo Aretino's *Vita di Dante*.

31 Landino, and moſt of the commentators after him, ſtate that Dante refers in this paſſage to the garriſon taken in Caprona, when it was recaptured the next year by the Piſans. But as Florence and Piſa continued at deſperate enmity, Dante could hardly have witneſſed this latter ſcene.

32 There is among the Canzoni of Dante one beginning,

" Morte poich' io non truovo a cui mi doglia,"

which ſeems to have been written during the illneſs of Beatrice, in view of

of her approaching death. It is a beautiful and touching poem. Death is beſought to ſpare that lady, "who of every good is the true gate."— "If thou extinguiſheſt the light of thoſe beautiful eyes, which were "wont to be ſo ſweet a guide to mine, I ſee that thou deſireſt my death."

"O Death, delay not mercy, if 'tis thine!
"For now I ſeem to ſee the heavens ope,
"And Angels of the Lord deſcending here,
"Intent to bear away the holy ſoul
"Of her whoſe honor there above is ſung."

33 In the earlier part of the *Vita Nuova* there are many references to the number nine. The paſſage given in the text is one of the moſt ſtriking illuſtrations of Dante's youthful fondneſs for ſeeking for the ſecret relations and inner meanings of things. The importance attributed to the properties of this number is no indication, as it might at firſt view ſeem, of puerility and poverty of feeling, but gives evidence of the ſenſitiveneſs of Dante's imagination to the impreſſions of ſuperſtition, when combined with learning and leading into the vague domains of myſticiſm. The myſterious powers and relations of numbers were in that age a ſubject of ſerious ſtudy, and were connected with various branches of ſcience and of life.

"Themiſtius vero, et Boethius, et Averrois Babylonius, cum Platone, "ſic numeros extollunt, ut neminem abſque illis poſſe recte philoſo- "phari putent. Loquuntur autem de numero rationali et formali, non "de materiali, ſenſibili, ſive vocali numero mercatorum. . . . Sed "intendunt ad proportionem ex illo reſultantem, quem numerum natu- "ralem et formalem et rationalem vocant; ex quo magna ſacramenta "emanant, tam in naturalibus quam divinis atque cœleſtibus. . . . . "In numeris itaque magnam latere efficaciam et virtutem tam ad bonum "quam ad malum, non modo ſplendidiſſimi philoſophi unanimiter docent, "ſed etiam doctores Catholici."—Cornelii Agrippæ *De Occultâ Philoſophiâ*, Liber Secundus, cc. 2, 3.

34 Ten was, according to the doctrine of Pythagoras, the perfect number. Thus it appears that Beatrice died on the 9th of June, 1290. She was a little more than twenty-four years old.

35 Compare with this paſſage Ballata v.,—

"Io mi ſon pargoletta bella e nova,"

and

and Sonnet xlv.,

" Da quella luce che 'l ſuo corſo gira " ;

the latter probably in praiſe of philoſophy.

36 In 1314, Dante addreſſed a letter to the Italian Cardinals beginning with theſe ſame words from Jeremiah, *Lamentations*, i. 1. Roſſetti hereupon founds an argument for the allegorical character of the *Vita Nuova*, aſſuming that Dante wrote but one letter with this commencement. But it is far more likely that the letter written after the death of Beatrice was a fanciful compoſition, addreſſed, in the exaggeration of grief, to the princes of the earth,—and that the words with which it began were employed by Dante anew, in his letter to the Cardinals, with no regard to his former uſe of them.

37 Among the ſonnets aſcribed to Dante is one which, if it be his, muſt have been written about this time, and which, although not included in the *Vita Nuova*, ſeems not unworthy to find a place here. Its imagery, at leaſt, connects it with ſome of the ſonnets in the earlier portion of the book.

" One day came Melancholy unto me,
" And ſaid, ' With thee I will awhile abide ' ;
" And, as it ſeemed, attending at her ſide,
" Anger and Grief did bear her company.
" ' Depart ! Away ! ' I cried out eagerly ;
" Then like a Greek ſhe unto me replied ;
" And while ſhe ſtood diſcourſing in her pride,
" I looked, and Love approaching us I ſee.
" In cloth of black full ſtrangely was he clad,
" A little hood he wore upon his head,
" And down his face tears flowing faſt he had.
" ' Poor little wretch ! what ails thee ? ' then I ſaid.
" And he replied, ' I woful am, and ſad,
" Sweet brother, for our lady who is dead.' "

38 In this year, 1291, Giotto was but fifteen years old, and probably a ſtudent with Cimabue. Benvenuto da Imola, who lectured publicly at Bologna on the *Divina Commedia* in the year 1378, reports, that, while Giotto, ſtill a young man, was painting at Padua, Dante viſited him. And Vaſari ſays, that it was a tradition, that Giotto had painted, in a chapel at Naples, ſcenes out of the *Apocalypſe*, from deſigns furniſhed

niſhed him by the poet. If we may believe another tradition, which there ſeems, indeed, little reaſon to doubt, Giotto went to Ravenna during the laſt years of Dante's life, that he might ſpend there ſome time in company with his exiled friend.

39 See *Purgatorio*, ii. 112–114. This Canzone, to the expoſition of which the third Trattato of the *Convito* is devoted, has been inimitably tranſlated by the Reverend Charles T. Brooks. See *The Crayon*, for February, 1858.

40 The moſt precious relic at Rome, and the one which chiefly attracted pilgrims, during a long period of the Middle Ages, was the *Veronica*, or repreſentation of the Saviour's face, ſuppoſed to have been miraculouſly impreſſed upon the handkerchief with which he wiped his face on his way to Calvary. It was preſerved at St. Peter's and ſhown only on ſpecial occaſions. Compare with this paſſage the lines in the *Paradiſo*, xxi. 103–108 :—

" As one that haply from Croatia came
" To ſee our Veronica, and no whit
" Could be contented with its olden fame,
" Who in his heart ſaith, when they're ſhowing it,
" ' O Jeſu Chriſt ! O very Lord God mine !
" Does truly this thy feature counterfeit ? ' "

CAYLEY.

41 The ſhrine of St. James, at Compoſtella, (contracted from *Giacomo Apoſtolo*,) in Galicia, was a great reſort of pilgrims during the Middle Ages,—and Santiago, the military patron of Spain, was one of the moſt popular ſaints of Chriſtendom. The reader of the *Paradiſo* will remember the lines (xxv. 16–18),—

" E la mia Donna piena di letizia
" Mi diſſe : Mira, mira, ecco il Barone,
" Per cui laggiù ſi viſita Galizia."

Chaucer ſays, the Wif of Bathe

" Had paſſed many a ſtraunge ſtreem ;
" At Rome ſche hadde ben, and at Boloyne,
" In Galice at Seynt Jame, and at Coloyne."

And Shakeſpeare, in *All's Well that Ends Well*, makes Helena repreſent herſelf as " St. Jacques's pilgrim."

THE END.

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